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The Birth of Montreal

A Chronicle Play

And Other Poems

AMY REDPATH RODDICK



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THE BIRTH OF MONTREAL

A CHRONICLE PLAY

AND

OTHER POEMS



BY

AMY REDPATH RODDICK

Author of "The Flag and Other Poems"

"The Armistice and Other Poems"

"The Seekers. an Indian Mystery Play"

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THE BIRTH OF MONTREAL

A CHRONICLE PLAY

AND

OTHER POEMS

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JOHN W. R. RODGERS

Author of "The Birth of Montreal"

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THE BIRTH OF MONTREAL

A CHRONICLE PLAY

THE BIRTH OF MONTREAL
A CHRONICLE PLAY

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CHARACTERS.

Marinette	<i>An Attendant</i>
Madame de La Dauversiere	
Monsieur de La Dauversiere	
The Baron de Fancamp	
Jeanne	<i>A Huron Convert</i>
Mademoiselle Jeanne Mance	
Monsieur de Maisonneuve	
Madame de la Peltrie	
Chehteh	}..... <i>Huron Chiefs</i>
Anontaha	
Mitiwemeg	<i>Algonquin Chief</i>
Jesuit Father	
Pierre Laimery	
Jean Robelin	
Adam Dollard, Sieur des Ormeaux	
Sister Marguerite Bourgeoys	
Colonists	

ACT I.

THE VISION.

Scene.—The living room of a house in La Fleche, France, late in the autumn of the year 1639, showing the owners to be in moderate circumstances. Marinette draws the curtains and lights the candles. Madame de La Dauversiere, sitting on the sofa, impatiently turns over the pages of a book, then throws it from her and sighs.

Marinette. Madame is restless?

Madame. Restless scarce describes
Anxiety. No peace by day or night
Since first, through visionings, your Master found
His destiny, an island wilderness,
Encompassed by fierce scalping savages.
Of nothing else he speaks but Montreal,
Montreal.

Marinette. Where is this Montreal?

Madame. In Canada.

Marinette. Ah, Canada, that sounds
Familiar.

Madame. More familiar than I wish.

Would that Jacques Cartier had been satisfied
 With this old France, nor risk discoveries
 Beyond the sea; would that the Jesuits
 Had been content with silent venturings,
 Nor scatter broadcast skilful narratives,
 Inflaming souls till life that's everyday
 Grows dull, till visions come and voices speak.

Marinette. This trip to Paris may divert.

Madame. Small chance,
 I fear, his letters sound too jubilant,
 Though nought but messages of love. All else
 Is secret, pending his return.—What ails
 The clock? It ticks incessantly, but stays
 The same.

Marinette. Madame herself might hasten it,
 Did she confide in one who honestly
 Has served through children's ailments, worryings
 And much derangement.

Madame. 'Tis true, upheavals mark
 This house, whose Master smiles serenely, talks
 Of peace—[sobbing] of peace in heathen lands!

Marinette. [*Sitting down.*] Monsieur
 Has changed?

Madame. He feels himself inspired to build
 A sacred city, he whose means suffice
 But ill for family support; who has
 No influence, a tax-receiver.

Marinette. Like
 St. Matthew!

Madame. Yes, that's how the Baron speaks,

Encouraging, as ardent now himself,
Until a fancied hospital has stretched,
And in their minds a city now exists,
Whose buildings all are placed, environments
Well known—four years to raise with fertile dreams,
How long with stones?

Marinette. Four years since first Monsieur
Returned from Mass, his face so shining-bright,
A halo glowed, I thought.

Madame. 'Tis past belief,
This mission then received, and yet at times
His fervour quells my doubt; an enterprise
Thus shadowy and yet such confidence;
To found a new religious Order, he,
A married man, a laic; then to build
An hospital where serve these nursing-nuns,
St. Joseph honouring, in Montreal,
A forest-isle; their patients, savages,
Immodest, fierce and liable to outbursts
On slightest provocation, brandishing
Great axes, sharpened stones! He thinks our young
French girls invincible—to cope with frost,
And snow that's mountain-high, convert such men,
Some cannibals, to Christian gentleness.

Marinette. And such God's will?

Madame. So says Monsieur, the voice
Then heard, how often since! celestial—come
The Father Confessor now admits, reward
For penitence and flesh that's nightly scourged.
The whip you've seen of iron chains, but not
The belt that sharply pricks twelve hundred wounds.
Poor man, I grieve this body roughly used;
But still his spirit soars, the single gift
He asks of God is Faith—assuredly

Already his.

[*A pause, followed by the sound of loud knocking.*] They come! they come!

[*She springs up. Exit Marinette. Enter Monsieur de La Dauversiere and the Baron de Fancamp. The former kisses his wife on either cheek, the latter kisses her hand.*]

Like boys

Released from school you laugh, not thus tired men
Discouraged from rash venturing.

Dauverseire. [*Handing his wife a wallet.*] See here,
My wife, one hundred louis, precious coins!
Now hold and weigh them lovingly, then tell
Some day your children's children once within
Your grasp the egg whence came the roofs and towers
Of Ville Marie in Montreal.

Madame. [*Weighing the wallet in her hand.*] 'Tis light
For so much worth!

Dauversiere. Our flooding Loire was once
A trickling brook; how many rivers flush
Its course! [*Taking back the wallet.*] What streams of gold
will weight this purse!

[*Enter Marinette with a tray of light refreshments for the travellers, who find chairs near the table. Madame de La Dauversiere repose on the sofa.*]

Ah, Marinette, such dainty fare! To break
My fast you scheme! and unashamed, you smile.

Marinette. I would Monsieur showed kindness to himself.

Dauversiere. Too kind at times; the watchful Enemy
A frailty oft detects.

[*Exit Marinette. Monsieur de la Dauversiere eats spar-*

ingly, the Baron de Fancamp more heartily.]

De Fancamp. These cakes are nice,
Madame. A privilege to share this home!
And now, this most stupendous task!

Madame. [Wearily] For all
Our sakes a humbler one would better suit;
But anxious I to hear the news, you thirst
To tell.

De Fancamp. Success beyond our fondest hope,
But where, amid such wealth of circumstance,
Shall we begin?

Dauversiere. With Satan's harsh assault,
His stroke was darkness. Indecisions, doubts
Arose. Three times, irresolute, we turned;
Three times, with dragging effort, drove ourselves
To fresh belief. The fallen Angel feared
This wedge we sought within his boundaries,
Foresaw his vast dominions jeopardized,
So strained to weaken us, by fell design;
Till Heav'n vouchsafed anew her surety.

De Fancamp. Yes,
That sense of dull despair, that sickly sense
That falsifies and dims, has ever been
The Evil One's most cruel dart. With loss
Of confidence, how ask our friends for help
In this prodigious work; we saw their heads
Low-drooped to hide the pity felt for crazed
Imaginings.

Madame. [Sarcastically.] So I should think!

Dauversiere. But, wife,
How, chartless, knew I then each bay and dent

Of that fair isle, called Montreal, its length
 And varied breadth, the streams meandering,
 The fertile plain and densely wooded slopes,
 'That thrice-crowned mount, suggesting Trinity.

Madame. Our house lacks much, but books are plentiful.

Dawversiere. Most loose their knowledge; mine's exact,
 and hark!

How verified! [*After a pause, rising, his face flushed with excitement.*]

But first, in ecstasy
 Most glorious, my soul relieved of gloom,
 Hell's Potentate o'erthrown—

Madame.

At least that once!

Dawversiere. The vision, then revealed, has hardened
 me
 Against his sharpest pricks. 'Twas at Notre-Dame;
 Before the Blessed Virgin's altar, where
 I knelt, imploring fervently, this grace
 Was granted me. Those transports roused by Mass,
 Within the sombre edifice, effaced
 All thought of self; in rapturous amaze
 I clearly saw that august Family, [*bowing his head*],
 Jesu, Mary, Joseph. Thrice our Lord,
 The Christ-child, radiant, distinctly spoke:
 Where find a faithful servant?
 Where find a faithful servant?
 Where find a faithful servant?
 Then softly touching me, His Mother said:
 "Behold! my Son, this faithful servant," O,
 What bliss ineffable! He gazed on me
 And smiled: "Henceforth my faithful servant! I
 Have need of you: fear nought; I give my strength
 And wisdom; where your Guardian Angel points,
 There lies the path; its goal is tangible;

My grace suffices!" I saw his hand outstretched,
A ring was gently tendered; it bore these words:
"Jesus, Mary, Joseph," graven.

Madame. [*Visibly moved.*] Almost
I see—

Dauversiere. Some day, in Montreal, my nuns
Will wear such token.—Where stood the Holy Group
Now shadowed forth great churches, godly schools,
Infirmaries as erstwhile seen; and then,
In long procession, eager faces passed,
Each stamped in memory forever, each
A glad co-worker in salvation's scheme!

Madame. In spite of self, your ardour seizes me,
Yet 'tis but visions, visions!

De Fancamp. Nay, Madame,
This apparition's proved: the gold you've seen,
Who gave, in priestly garb, walked first. My friend
Described him perfectly, for since, we've met,
And in God's time, his reverent array
Of followers will too declare themselves.

Dauversiere. At Muedon, summoned by the Chancellor.

Madame. So you remembered earth's affairs, what then?

Dauversiere. Within the castle-gallery a form
Approached, a moment's startled pause—I touched
Who lead that dream-cortege, his face and vestments.
Then clasped, as ancient friends, in dear embrace,
We volleyed welcomes forth; no episode
In either life unknown. 'Twas like St. Paul,
The Hermit, meeting first St. Anthony,
St. Francis greeting first St. Dominic!
"I wish to share in God's design," he said,

With meek simplicity, then handed me
This gold.

Madame. Enthusiasts are plentiful!
Yet few, thus credulous, distribute coin.

Dauversiere. Like mine, his evidence was heaven-sent,
He heard my voices, dreamt my dreams! a priest,
Named Olier, a torch to light the Gentiles!
For three long hours we walked the castle-grounds
And as we strolled, the town of Ville Marie,
In Montreal, became a certainty.

De Fancamp. Astonishing! Next day their schemes
were shared
With me. The great on earth, who have their times
Of lofty exaltation, never know
That gladness, bathed with tears and lit with smiles,
Wherewith the Holy Spirit seals the bonds
Of those who league in hallowed enterprise—
Three great Communities were planned, three heads
On earth, these two dear friends of mine and one,
A maid of Troyes, through Heaven's prompting known;
The Priests to consecrate their lives to Christ;
The Nursing-nuns to Joseph, those who teach
To Mary—Ville Marie, through faith, assured
The Holy Family's safe-guarding!

Dauversiere.
We three associates—

Yes,

De Fancamp.
Affirming!

The mystic three

Dauversiere. Felt no need to hesitate.
Idealists are oft more practical,
My wife; than those whose round of drudgery
Remains unlit by starry promises.

We ordered twenty tons of carefully
Assorted foods, utensils, tools, all sent
Next spring to Canada, awaiting there
Our future colony.

Madame.

'Twill drain that purse!

De Fancamp. My fortune first of streams to swell its
size!

Warm hearts expectantly now beat in France
Whose wealth will flow as mine. With confidence
Unshakable our shoulders are set to plough,
Although, in Montreal, we have acquired
No rights, nor will an absent Master speak
Of sale; although who finds a foothold there
Must face the tomahawk of Iroquois.

Madame. Not I alone; but others, those with sense,
Will call this scheme, foolhardy, rash; across
A wreck-strewn ocean lies that land, ice-locked,
Surprised by constant butcheries; expense
That's infinite!—despising trade, though furs
Might reimburse; such strained philanthropy,
If needful, well, the King should undertake.

Dauversiere. [*Exultantly.*] Ay wife, a King's work!—
We, His servitors,

Madame. O, think of those young, clinging hands, that
search
Their future through a father's care? For self,
For comfort, I'll not beg; but see, I kneel
For them! [*Kneels imploringly.*]

De Fancamp. If she were right, what then?

Dauversiere. The Tempter
Triumphant! Through paternal instincts now

He works.

Madame. Forget this madness, born of dreams.

Dauversiere. Ay, dreams, but living dreams, nought
now I fear.

An earthly king who builds a structure rare
And beautiful, protects its burnished grace
And guards the skilled contrivers. How, but think
The King, Omnipotent, will blow the winds
To fill our sails—see, wife, that vision there!

[*A vision appears of the future City of Montreal. Enter
Marinette. All stand with clasped hands in deep amaze-
ment.*]

ACT II.

THE CROSS.

Scene I.—The storeroom of the fort of Ville Marie in Montreal, near midnight, Christmas, in the year 1642. Made-moiselle Mance and Jeanne are putting away some utensils after the festivities.

Jeanne. Rest, Meadow Rose, I'll pile these things for you.

Mdlle. Mance. [*Sitting down, somewhat wearily.*] Why call me that?

Jeanne. Was I not christened, Jeanne, Your name? 'Tis fair exchange to give you mine, Marraine, and Meadow Rose becomes you well. Its sweetness thrives where rocks are thickest strewn, No passerby's refused a smooth-stemmed bud. But why these sighs on Little Jesu's day?

Mdlle. Mance. This Christmas, though a wondrous novelty
For you, my Jeanne, incites remembrance. France
Has grown most dear to-night,—a prison once
It seemed, such chains of argument, convention,
And tender ties that must be harshly broken;
But God sustained.—We smile, the past is past,

'Tis Christmas night in Ville Marie! We watch
Our dream's unfoldment, here, in Montreal.

Jeanne. With thunder-words the big guns spoke the
news
That Jesu, born in Bethlehem, had come
To Hochelay. 'Twas fine the noise they roared
To celebrate the day. The Black Robes said
That demons mourned; but Guardian Angels marked
The tale in Paradise. I know mine laughed,
And I'll be good to keep him thus rejoiced.

Mlle. Mance. Most constant watchfulness or vain's
your boast.

Jeanne. When eyes are sparkled with festivity,
The slumber-sprite is vexed. Though late, let me
Sit here [*She sits on the floor, leaning against Mademoiselle*
Mance] and think of midnight mass, the lights
That starred through spice of trailing evergreen,
The little manger, God-Papoose, strange beasts,
And sweet-faced Squaw, the solemn songs and then
To-day, the games as played in France—and much
To eat!

Mlle. Mance. Poor Jeanne, that boast is seldom heard.

Jeanne. For meat and drink your smile's enough, to
work
With you, 'tis happy play. In Silery
I learnt French-talk, but none soft-voiced as you,
And most I loved you when, last shad-fish moon,
Arriving here, you plucked a trillium, held
It so, admiringly, and seemed to breathe
A song from it, the way my people do.
You kissed it then before 'twas pressed asleep,
'Mid blessed words, in this Novena. [*She draws the book from*

Mademoiselle Mance's pocket.]

Mdlle. Mance. [*Stretching for the book and opening it where the flower lies.*] Ay!

Fit emblem of our great adventure, thou,
Fair-omened flower, thrice-bladed Truth, that hymnest
The Holy Family's response to earth,
Reminder now of that auspicious day,
When, skirting first these shores all blossom-strewn,
We sighted, near a stream, the visioned spot,
Where Ville Marie should spring in praise of God.

[*Enter Monsieur de Maisonneuve.*]

Jeanne. [*Rising.*] "Were every tree an Iroquois, I still
Would found a colony in Montreal,
My honour, as my duty, calls me forth."

Maisonneuve. So little Jeanne remembers well my words,
And thus she flatters!—Still a forfeit's owed,
Each sought to entertain; but you, when asked
A story, wriggled like a frightened dog.
Then slipped away. [*He sits on a packing-case.*]

Jeanne. My people fear these tales,
When winter's grasp is loosed and Manitou's
Awake. It thaws to-night.

Maisonneuve. A Christian fear
These idle tales! we'll have one now, then prayer
And bed!

Jeanne. [*Unwillingly.*] This comes from ancient times;
may be
'Tis safe.—Long moons ago a great Chief's eye
Flushed red with shooting pain. Enraged he tore
It out, replaced it with a humming bird's,
That scarcely filled the cavity and so

Was lost. A turtle's vision next was tried,
 But worse confusion followed, now he groped
 Through lonesome veils of mist. Perplexed and dazed
 He had but sense to fling that eye afar;
 Then chose a fish-hawk's keener sight, alas!
 What fresh alarm! This eye so glancing-quick
 The lake and river bottoms jumped to view,
 The smallest minnow could be plainly traced
 As spawning salmon; O such dread abyss
 That opened 'neath his frail canoe! Aghast,
 He even glimpsed the Lizard of the Pond
 Whose bulging-awfulness demanded prey;
 But just in time the wicked eye slipped out.
 What noise is that?

Maisonneuve. The wind, 'tis rough outside.

Jeanne. Still quiv'ring, he essayed a dog's, and now
 Success! both eyes well matched, the dog and man
 See things alike.

[*Enter Madame de la Peltrie.*]

Mad. de la Peltrie. The river is rising fast, Monsieur.

Jeanne. I said 'twas ill to mention names.
 My people know that spirits take offence.
 Such tales are only told when frost strikes deep,
 And Winter gives his shivering consent.

Mad. de la Peltrie. 'Tis Satan's work. St. Lawrence
 basin's broad,
 Small need to wash the shore; and yet, they say,
 The flood's most dang'rous high.

Maisonneuve. A winter-freshet,
 We hope it spreads enough to drown such fears.

[*Exit Monsieur de Maisonneuve.*]

Jeanne. Much else will drown but not their fears.

Mdlle. Mance. Come, Jeanne,
Repeat those words that Father Vimont used
When first God's praise was heard in Montreal,
Then speak no more of fears.

Jeanne. Marraine, I tremble

Mdlle. Mance. Sit here, you foolish girl.—“This settle-
ment's
A grain of mustard; but 'tis thrown by hands,
So pious, so inspired by living faith,
How doubt that Heaven has great and fair designs.
This feeble grain will branch and multiply;
Its wondrous growth will some day shadow far!

Mad. de la Peltrie. O Mademoiselle! to think my hands
have helped
To plant this seed. That future generations
Will hold these things in memory.

Mlle. Mance. Of that
I've little thought! God's work suffices.

Mad. de la Peltrie. O
That day when first we gained this hallowed spot,
Our hearts aglow with thankfulness, when first
Our Captain sprang ashore, we following;
All sank in prayer, tears and laughter mixed,
And hymns and canticles, each sang aloud
A joyous gratitude, none knew what words
Were used,—they mingled with the trill and chirp
Of forest birds, a melody of hope!
And there, 'mid opening leaves, they raised the altar
That we, O Mademoiselle, were privileged
To drape befitting that august occasion.

Mlle. Mance. How still and beautiful the day that
brought
Fulfilment. Peace on earth—and peace endureth!

Jeanne. *Marraine!* 'twas I who caught the fireflies,
trapped
Them carefully within the stoppered phial.
The shiny insects flickered, glad to serve
The Holy Sacrament.

Mad. de la Peltrie. A happy thought,
Our oil forgotten;—flame endowed with life,
Those tiny, clustered tapers, suiting well
Their lodgment; our cathedral bricked with sward
And foliage, its roof the firmament,
Where friends invisible gave comfort, strength,

[*Enter Monsieur de Maisonneuve.*]

While gentle, lapping waters spoke of those
In France, who prayed and worked with us.

Maisonneuve. In truth
These waters are not gentle now, Madame,
Your fears were just.

Jeanne. [*Starting up.*] My warning dropped unheeded.
Ville Marie's in sorry plight!

Mlle. Mance. Hush, Jeanne,
Think you God's promises are worthless? Has he
Not proved through signs and wonders? Who first conceived
This colony showed me a sketch, and there,
Most plainly featured: chapel, living-house
And fort as now established; shielded well
By river, stream and tangled wood. Next year
An hospital and so a city's growth. [*Reflectively.*]
Why doubt such revelation, justified

Thus far.—In La Rochelle, renewed by Mass,
 I met that saintly man, who welcomed me
 To fellowship with arms outstretched. Untold
 He knew my name and inward longings, how
 Despite a sickly frame and friends averse,
 I craved to bear Christ's burden in the wilds
 Of Canada. [*Addressing M. de Maisonneuve.*] He then ex-
 tolled your worth,
 Monsieur! Your followers, God-fearing folk;
 But men at best need woman's care; so I,
 Though vowed to maidenhood, was drawn to pledge
 My services; most truly gratified
 That others of my sex have found this road
 To Heaven—that I have sweet companionship!
 What search you there, Monsieur?

Maisonneuve. [*Drawing some paper from a box.*] A
 scrap of paper,
 Ah, here's your quill. To show the Fathers, I
 Would write some words. [*Writing.*] O God, if such thy
 glory,
 Thrust back these floods; if not, we humbly pray,
 Make known some proper place, where we may serve
 And worship Thee.

Mad. de la Peltrie. There's danger, then?

Maisonneuve. Most real!
 To stay the troublous tide, I'd plant a cross,
 Attaching first these lines, if favour be
 Accorded, I would raise another, a greater,
 A lasting cross upon Mount Royal's brow,
 Acknowledging God's clemency. I seek
 The Fathers to consult with them, will then
 Announce our project, begging fervent prayer.

Mdlle. Mance. No righteous prayer goes amiss, but still
 My faith assures that Ville Marie has dug
 Her roots.

[*Exeunt M. de Maisonneuve and the ladies, who throw cloaks over their shoulders. Jeanne opens a door in the centre of the stage and peeps out.*]

Jeanne. A blustrous night!—and menacing!
The Water-Demon spits his wrath and claws
The earth with dripping hands. The Frenchman's prayer
Lacks strength. Offended Spirits scarce will heed
The Stranger's tongue; but I, who worked this mischief,
Have medicine to cure, or Ville Marie
Will be destroyed, and how my friends will grieve.

[*She drops off her dress and is seen in an undergarment of linen, stained with butternut juice. She unbinds her hair and shakes it loose, then takes a pistol from the shelf.*]

French prayer helps much in certain ills; their Devil's
Discouraged by soft words; but ours is bold!—

[*She fires the pistol through the central doorway.*]

That awful noise should frighten him, O how
The waters swish!

[*She takes in her arms a small white dog that has been awakened by the noise and recites with movements to suit the words.*]

Great Lizard of the Pond,
Thy waters creep,
Great Lizard of the Pond,
Thy waters sweep,
Great Lizard of the Pond,
Thy waters leap!
Leap! Leap!—Leap!—Leap!

Great Lizard of the Pond,
My gift, O keep! [*She throws the dog far outside.*]
Great Lizard of the Pond,
Drink deep, drink deep,
Great Lizard of the Pond,
Fall fast asleep,
Sleep, sleep,—sleep, sleep,
Sleep, sleep,—sleep, slee—

[Enter Mdlle. Mance and M. de Maisonneuve.]

Mdlle. Mance. Jeanne, Jeanne! who fired that gun?
What mummerly!
And this immodest dress!

Maisonneuve. That scarce would shame
A titled dame in France; but ill becomes
An honest Indian girl.

Jeanne. [*Speaking very low.*] Hush, hush, I thought
To fright the demon, then to charm asleep.

Maisonneuve. [*Addressing Mdlle. Mance.*] Mademois-
elle, such fall from grace reproves
Your pride! But yesterday, I heard you boast
This convert's piety! [*Exit M. de Maisonneuve.*]

Mdlle. Mance. O Jeanne, you shame
My prayers.

Jeanne. No, no, Marraine. [*She runs to Mademoiselle
Mance and pets her hand, then pointing.*] But see my
gift's
Refused, the Demon's still unpacified!
[*The dog creeps back. Mademoiselle Mance takes a towel
and rubs the shivering animal. After a time she looks at
Jeanne, who pulls a small bag from her bodice.*]

Mdlle. Mance. The dog is drenched, poor beast! What
nonsense now?

Jeanne. My medicine! an owl's feathered horn!
When dawned my fourteenth summer, as our custom,
I sought the distant solitude; there fasting
Some fourteen suns, an owl's beak pricked my brain,
Its yellow eyes stared mine awake—the owl's
My manitou and I am wise beyond
Most Indian girls. My medicine but needs

An offering, some puffed tobacco smoke;
To exorcise, some magic words.

Mlle. Mance.
That senseless thing, and beg forgiveness.

Then drop

Jeanne. My wisdom! nay, disastrous thought!

Mlle. Mance. [*Pointing outside.*] Look! look!
They raise the Cross as all now sink in prayer,
Quick, throw that evil charm; ah, there it goes!
Let savage wisdom bend to Christian grace.
Kneel here with me, this blanket wrapped around,
So may God's mercy flush and warm your soul,
Resentment fades as supplication stirs
The heart, and self is merged in reverence.

Voices from outside.

When rock with wood was smitten,
Clear waters gurgled forth,
The Faith, that led through deserts,
Has tamed this frigid North.

Though here the waters gather,
Tempestuous and bold,
Let wood now save and shelter,
As Noah's arc of old.

O tree of sweet salvation,
That stills the soul's unrest,
Whence hung a precious burden,
The Word made manifest,

O teach our flesh to suffer,
If such thy message be,
Uphold us though and strengthen;
God save our Colony!

[*Enter Madame de la Peltrie and Monsieur de Maisonneuve.*]

Maisonneuve. O heavy thought! So soon to be demolished,

The fruit of anxious prayer! of stern endeavour!
Our long months' work is vanity.—God's will
Be done!

Mad. de la Peltrie. 'Tis fierce without, the skies submerge
A land sufficient soaked, and winds now whet
Like tidal waves, the flood's incoming rush,
Small use to move our goods, where refuge them?

Maisonneuve. The boxed munitions might be saved, at
least
An effort made. [*Exit.*]

Mad. de la Peltrie. [*Lifting some packages.*] These
parcels raised, why stand
Deploring, arms unbusied?

Mdlle. Mance. Something, not
Of self, persuades no flood will damp this place;
God's purpose here has been so oft revealed.

Mad. de la Peltrie. [*Turning.*] What splashes there?
'tis like a fountain playing
In France, a Sabbath melody; nay now
A fierce cascade that tears an Alpine slope
With torrent snows!

Jeanne. The waters overcharge
And swell the moat.

Mad. de la Peltrie. O, Mary, save us now!

Mdlle. Mance. Beyond this threshold not one drop will

pass,
 As Abraham was purified, so God
 Perfects our faith through dire extremities.

Mad. de la Peltrie. God grant, you utter truth, but see
 the flood
 Ascends as though alive with steady purpose—
 Malevolence, pit-brewed by that fell Power
 Whose favourite preserves we seek to wrest,

[*Stooping with Jeanne over the threshold.*]
 My hand is wet with spatterings, 'tis-time
 To plan our flight.

Mdlle. Mance. And leave the 'Tempter here
 Victorious! his challenge undisputed!

Jeanne. Marraigne, but one hand-length to climb.

Mdlle. Mance. But one
 Hand-length—and then, no more.

[*Enter Montreal's first Colonists, singing.*]

Colonists.

Ville Marie, conceived by vision,
 Born of prayer and sacrifice;
 Privileged to nurse thy glory,
 Shall we haggle at the price?

Symbol of earth's resurrection,
 Phoenix sprung renewed from fire,
 Red and golden plumage shining,
 Thus the town of long desire.

Jesu, Mary, Joseph, help us
 In this hour of awful need,
 Jerusalem to sing your praises,
 Watch, preserve its stainless seed.

[*The Colonists start moving the heavy cases.*]

Mad. de la Peltrie. The water now has touched the threshold, see

It slowly levels, soon will overpour,
While we stay thus transfixed.

Mdlle. Mance.

It will not pass!

Mad. de la Peltrie. The brink is reached! O God, have mercy.

Mdlle. Mance.

Ay,

He has. The trembling water comes no further.
By saving Faith confounded, lo, it slinks
Away.

Jeanne. 'Tis true! the flood retires!

Mad. de la Peltrie.

Now, God

Be praised!

Colonists.

Ville Marie! conceived by vision,
Born of prayer and sacrifice,
Wardened by the God of Ages,
Rise and live, a Paradise!

Scene II.—The summit of Mount Royal, Epiphany, in the year 1643, twelve days after the great flood. Fresh fallen snow sparkles in the morning sunshine.

[*Enter Jeanne from left.*]

Jeanne. Toward straight-limbed pine the shadow backward creeps
To mark the time and place—And there he comes
With two besides—Ho! Grand-dad, ho! I wait.

[*Enter from right Chehteh, Anontaha and Mitivemeg on snow-shoes, in winter travelling garb, each pulling a loaded toboggan, the fruit of the chase.*]

Chehteh. Ho! Meadow Rose. You fail us not. As plump
As some teased porcupine; [*Patting Jeanne*] though not so prickly.
The strangers do not grudge their food—

Jeanne. Their store
Is low; but scantiness they share.

Chehteh. A virtue
Peculiar to all people then, that they
Of dog-like countenance should practise it.
But come you empty-handed? You, who boast
The owlet's knack of pilfering.

Jeanne. I bring
The news you asked and nought besides. To learn
The White man's ways, to find his purpose here,
That was the cruel task you set, to flatter,
To fawn—to steal his secrets and his goods.
His secret, open as the day, I share
With you; his goods are bound with friendship's cord.

French squaws I ever loved, their Braves were most
 Repugnant though, with bristled faces, shrugs,
 And noisy bursts of laughter; now I love
 Them too, a maid may walk among the roughest,
 Nor blush at covert jest.

Chehteh. Come, Meadow Rose,
 This young man's mother grows infirm, a wife
 He seeks. Plant not the seed of jealousy.

Anontaha. This necklace, strung with finest purple
 shells,
 Will plead. [*He hands Jeanne a string of beads.*]

Jeanne. They're perfect-matched!—but take it.

Anontaha. Your
 Refuse my offering!

Jeanne. What choice have I,
 Till you have earned a Frenchman's name? Return
 Next spring, learn Christian truth; beneath the guns
 Of Ville Marie some fallow land awaits
 Our toil, and there I'll watch expectantly!

Chehteh. Those black-robed wizards have bewitched, to
 so
 Forget your people.

Jeanne. Truth, I've learnt, a charm
 That heals the wounded heart, with quiet thoughts,
 To sift the stranger's prompting I was bid,
 What inner motive forced this settlement,
 How could this feeble effort hope to stem
 The Iroquois, who have so oft rebuked
 Our Huron Pride, what selfish end induced
 Such danger! well, 'twas friendliness and love.

THE BIRTH OF MONTREAL

Chehteh. Then what was prophesied has come to pass,
And Hochelay endures!—But whence that sound? [*Looking
toward the left downwards.*]

The French attempt snake-dancing, so, what droll,
What languid coils! the hill fatigues and such
A burden that poor wretch is shouldering;
Two weighty, crosswise beams! some punishment!

Jeanne. Why, that's their Chief, great Maisonneuve,
whom all
Obey and reverence!

Chehteh. To show his prowess?
A Brave's defiance then?

Jeanne. In gratitude
That cross is humbly carried, here 'twill loud
Proclaim the White-man's Manitou's supreme!

Chehteh. Whist! Silence, girl! The depths have ears,
though locked
By frost. 'Tis most unsafe to stay. Our spirits
Are not of stuff to brook such arrogance.

Jeanne. Fear nought, unless, in pride, derisive words
You speak. Before the Frenchman's Manitou
Our mighty stream has cringed and fled, though roused
Through thaw to deluge-strength. Great batt'ring waves
Attacked, they scorned the sacrificial dance
And filched my medicine; but dared not pass
The little Jesu's dwelling place—O much
Instruction's needed!—Hark! long moons ago,
The black Robes say, wise kings presented gold,
Sweet perfumed smokes and you, three powerful chiefs
Who trailed thus far for stolen goods, this day
Will leave rich gifts behind.

[*Distant singing now grows louder.. Enter left procession*

of Colonists, led by Monsieur de Maisonneuve carrying a heavy cross, closely followed by the Jesuit Father, Mademoiselle Mance and Madame de la Peltrie.]

Colonists.

Mystic gifts the Magi bring,
Incense breathes eternity,
Gold announces Christ, the King,
Myrrh assumes mortality.

Priceless gifts the Babe bestows,
Perfect faith for incense rare,
Charity, for gold, o'erflows,
Truth and hope for myrrh's despair.

Lowly bend the Magi now,
Neath the cross, with staff and bowl,
Earthly rank they disavow,
Crowns of martyrdom their goal!

[Monsieur de Maisonneuve staggers. Mademoiselle Mance and some of the Colonists hasten to help him. At the back others arrange the pedestal for the cross and raise the altar, superintended by the Jesuit Father and Madame de la Peltrie.]

Mdlle. Mance. Relieve Monsieur, he sinks exhausted, O
If we had brought some covering, a shawl
At least. I blame myself! 'Tis most unwise
To lie exposed when moist from such a strain.
Why Jeanne, a timely thought! *[Jeanne hands Mademoiselle Mance a fur rug taken from her grandfather's toboggan.]*

Jeanne. A bear-skin rug,
My granddad begs the great French chief to accept.
Mdlle. Mance. *[Covering Monsieur de Maisonneuve.]*
Whence come these men?

Jeanne. From Eastern lands with gifts.

When we descend, before the lighted crib
They'll kneel, presenting them; three mighty Chiefs.

Chehteh. East and West and North and South, my
people
Are scatterlings! though once in Hochelay
They lived content, in Hochelay, whose ruins
Now peep where beavers dammed a purling brook.
That work remains, the beavers still are housed—
But what of ancient Hochelay, whose pride
The poets sang? In tales alone we trace
Those stubborn palisades and lodges stored
With grain above—beneath wide chambers whence
Arose the sounds of hived-humanity,
Joking sounds, but querulous they grew,
“Prosperity had robbed our simple ways,”
Sighed Grandfather, dwelling oft on days long fled,
His childhood passed in luxury, his youth
And age in hopeless wandering. A prophet
Had warned of coming doom; but who, when food
Is plentiful, gives ear to caution's voice?
And Hochelay was passing proud, a town
Of feast and dance and song, a meeting place
For joyous villages that straggled far; [*pointing*]
Some perched where rise those pleasant hills that vary
The grace of plain and sky as travels the sight
Across our mighty stream. Yes, Hochelay
Was proud and strong,—to-day dust-mounds but scratch
A grassy wilderness, so marks the hand
Of Fate!

Jesuit Father [*Coming forward.*] God's spirit has moved,
the savages
Vacate this land, that Ville Marie may rise
To sing his praise, extend his boundaries!

Maisonneuve. And yet 'tis sad, a past so blotted out,
What force has wrought such harm?

Chehteh.

A maiden was

The seeming cause; but under-drifts forewarned
 Approaching tragedy. Two powerful tribes,
 When giants roamed, subdued this neighbourhood,
 Enjoyed the mellow breeze and fruitful soil,
 Grew stout, protentious, loved display, abjured
 Instructive tales; the impure jest was caught
 And thrown, from nothingness dissensions spread.
 A forest, bathed with sunshine, is easily
 The prey of some chance spark.—A Huron maid
 Ensnared a Seneca, his father spurned
 The girl, whose beauty soon avengers found;
 A murdered chief in pomp of burial!
 Sufficed no presents now. A death-grip locked
 Two mighty tribes, whose beggared sons deplore
 The affluence their fathers tossed aside.

Maisonneuve. A second Troy! whose reprimand creates
 Forebodings;—but our Ville Marie's secured
 By prayer!

Jesuit Father. [*Addressing Chehteh.*] Beyond most sav-
 ages your thought.

Chehteh. Among my ancestors I boast a Prophet;
 His silver tongue spilled music. Of Hochelay
 Prostrate he sang; above its crumbled ruins
 Another race should habit, and then another,

Jesuit Father. Farms tilled by Indians, in happy
 clusters,
 We hope to further; receiving light and truth
 From Ville Marie. Each race acknowledging
 The Lys of France!

Chehteh. Your words are wasted breath,
 The tomahawk of Iroquois is still
 Unburied. The evil spirit has long been roused,

And unafraid he walks, for good has vanished.

Maisonneuve. Nay, good has armoured us to fight and win,
 And I'm first Soldier of the Cross, as those
 Who faced the Saracen in Palestine.
 This morning's ordinance has opened vistas
 Elate with sacrifice! A lad, I poured
 O'er tales of chivalry, undreaming I
 Should hear our church repeat those words: 'Dieu vult.'

Jesuit Father. None worthier!

Maisonneuve. Would that were so! As I,
 Toiled upward, weighted with Salvation's standard,
 I seemed to gently float, so light the burden!
 While surged within my brain the Church's promise:
 "Lord, we pray your clemency, deliver
 From peril, alway safeguard this your servant,
 Who following your word, in your employ,
 Desires to bear his cross, to fight your foes,
 To fortify your chosen people."

Mdlle. Mance.
 Is nathless much fatigued.

Monsieur

Maisonneuve. 'Twill pass. How came
 I though to make such speech, my inward thought
 Discovering! Excitement jerks the lid
 From cold reserve—like caldron-steam, needs vent.
 This day has crowned my life! [*After a pause.*] I had forgot
 These friends, most fit their presence here to witness
 From off this Royal Mount, Christ's kingdom far
 Proclaimed!

Chehteh. Your thought's obscure, but this I glean
 The White-mans' Manitou now triumphs here.
 His power, the future; not the present, proves!—

If signs and omens give consent, when suns
Are highest this shall be our meeting-place;
With others of our tribe we'll come; we'll hear
Your wisdom, weigh its meaning, sift the truth,
Embrace—or disagree. Till then [*Glancing at the altar*]
Who would
Suppose? A feast, in winter time, without
A fire!

Maisonneuve. [*Rising.*] Ay, God's Feast!

[*Chehteh, Anontaha and Mitiwemeg walk over and examine the altar.. The Cross is raised.*]

The Colonists. [*Facing the Cross.*]
Hail the Saviour! Hail the Cross!
Banner stained with Victory!
Law and Truth restored through loss,
Glory won through Calvary!

Hail to thee, Salvation's sign!
Wood protecting, wood august,
Hail the soul's eternal shrine,
Star of peace and perfect trust!

ACT III.

THE COMBAT.

Scene I.—The common room of the Fort of Ville Marie, the morning of the thirtieth of March, in the year 1644. A dog's bark without gives warning of an Iroquois ambuscade. Monsieur de Maisonneuve, Pierre Laimery and Jean Robelin replace some accoutrements they have just taken down. Jeanne is dusting.

Maisonneuve. Those skulking devils back! What lives
were lost?

If our Pilotte forgot her watchful guard,
Her warning yelp bids us remain within,
Our work is sadly handicapped.

Pierre.

Monsieur,

There is a remedy; let us attack
The teasing foe, so strike that he will shun
This neighbourhood as we his presence now.

Maisonneuve. Invite disaster! How can we, a handful,
Pursue the Iroquois, whose tactics serve
The forest glade while ours, the open field.
If, yielding to your ardour, we embark
On enterprise thus perilous; how soon,
Think you, before some ambuscade entraps,
A score of bristling savages, 'gainst each

Of us. A little patience! When God inspires
 More friends to cross the sea, sufficient blows
 We'll risk! To-day we'll build as Heav'n sees fit,
 Nor tempt discomfiture through foolish prompting.
 The courage, born of youth, needs discipline,
 Till time wakes sacrifice from vain bravado. [*Exit.*]

Pierre. Our governor, in Holland, was reputed,
 If less abstemious, belike Dutch courage!
 For here his prudence points to cowardice.

Jean. Unsoldierlike he shunned companionship,
 'Tis rumoured, strung hymn-tunes upon his lute,
 Preserving thus a strict integrity,
 'Mid libertines and heretics; most worthy,
 But savouring of over vigilance.

Pierre. There barks *Pilotte* encouraging her pups,
 Our leader tamely whiles the time.

Jeanne. He works
 As any five of you!

Pierre. Ay, works! that's tame
 Enough! Those yapping pups excite my blood.
 One goodly thrust to teach the Iroquois
 Our ships brought men from France, nor prisoned rats.

Jean. Hush! his step! No petty spy who treads
 Thus noisily.

[*Enter Monsieur de Maisonneuve.*]

Maisonneuve. The Fathers need your help,
 To place some chapel-pictures. Bestir yourselves.

Pierre. Monsieur, *Pilotte's* incessant bark has stirred
 Full measure. 'Tis troublesome to give our minds
 To aught but taunting savages! Let us

Account for'some—at least.

Maisonnette.

My child, the time

Has not arrived, suppose, through happy chance,
One hundred of our enemy dispatched,
What consequence? a droplet 'mid such hordes.
How different with us, a half-score dead—
Our colony would be reduced to grim
Despair—the dregs of brave adventure! In troth
We must preserve our strength else would I be
Much blamed. The daily task should satisfy. [*Exit.*]

Pierre. A chicken heart in virtue's livery!

And he's our Governor! Each time that bays
The dog, proclaiming hidden foes, let us
So gibe, a dunce would find our meaning—shamed
He'll lead us forth or—threats may influence.

Jean. Mutiny has not a pretty sound,

And yet those brave companions unavenged!
Can we stay reconciled? Have we not motive
To force an issue—or slip the curb?

Jeanne.

Their fate

You relish! I dropped some tears for them; but never
A flower I'll strew when our three lonely graves
Shrink from some newly garnered bones. That end's
Too fair! Your flesh may tempt the Iroquois,
Absorbing thus your bravery!

Jean.

Beshrew

The girl! suggesting baneful chance!

Pierre.

Our mates

Were trapped, were unprepared; but we, full-armed,
Another tale!

Jean. Pray God, the telling soon!

[*Exeunt Pierre Laimery and Jean Robelin. Jeanne stands in thought. Enter Mademoiselle Mance.*]

Mdlle. Mance. The Fathers wait, why Jeanne those men
have vanished

Jeanne [*Placing a chair.*] Sit here, Marraine, those men
are scarcely angels;

I fail to trace their lifting wings, hell yawns
For them.

Mdlle. Mance.—Your meaning, Jeanne? 'Tis best ex-
plained,
Or else repented.

Jeanne. They call us savages,
But which of us defies his Chief? nor man,
Nor beast. Our friends, the beasts, each vaunt a master;
The Hares, a mighty Hare, each tribe its leader,
And all comply submissively. The Pale-face
Against his Sagamore low-mutters.

Mdlle. Mance. I
Have feared; and yet how reconcile such qualms
With quiet faith that breathes from Ville Marie.
Suspensions voiced oft prove the cause of ill,
Repressed by silent prayer, they melt away.

Jeanne. Mosquitos buzz before they sting, suspicions
Unnoticed, worse may follow.

Mdlle. Mance. You hint our men—
[*Enter Monsieur de Maisonneuve.*]

Jeanne. Disloyal! yes, the Chief shall know, Monsieur,
They brand you coward!

Maisonneuve. [*Calmly.*] Well, a grave affront,
And yet since Noah's day 'tis ever thus,
Age censures youth and youth denounces age—

Jeanne. You plan a slow revenge, 'tis better so
Than sudden burst of passion.

Maisonneuve. [*Addressing Mademoiselle Mance.*]

Jeanne forgets

Herself; despite your teaching, Mademoiselle,
She is a pagan still, though overbold,
As some spoilt child in Christian lands—e'en so,
This question interests us. A soreness, come
These last few months, has led to grievous words
'That fester soon, unless some treatment be
Discovered. Like the Church, when Peter preached
And Mary walked remembering, we thought
Our settlement—one soul, one common life;
Command, obedience distinguished scarce,
So fervent all in godly exercise.
But now authority's endangered, swift
The change—and swift the cure.—We'll hazard flesh
Than risk dissensions. Hark! the dog is barking,
This time, a trumpet-blast!

Jeanne.

Monsieur, 'tis death,

Mdlle. Mance. Maybe 'tis life!

Maisonneuve..

That God approve my choice!

[*Enter Pierre Laimery, Jean Robelin, some of the
Colonists.*]

Pierre. Monsieur, the foe still flouts us scathless. We
Aloof, indifferent! [*sneeringly*] or terror stricken!

Maisonneuve. Your snowshoes, guns, accountrements!
prepare

To march! the Iroquois will gladly test
Your courage. Let the muster-bell peal forth
Our news; for Montreal we fight, this day,
We fight, pray God, we win!

[*Exit Jeanne.*]

THE BIRTH OF MONTREAL

The Colonists hesitate, then start preparing.

Jean. [Holding up a snow-shoe.] But see, Monsieur,
My snow-shoe's warped.

Pierre. And mine's mislaid, the snow
Begins to honeycomb, a month's delay
Would better serve, we must mature our plans.
This sudden rush—

Maisonneuve. Monsieur d'Ailleboust will guard.
The Fort, take charge if I should be detained.
These fellows, trained by Dutch intriguers, are sure
Of aim, yet we'll account for some. Quick, arm
Yourselves. Remember, we're not on church parade;
More solemn work. We'll ask God's blessing; then,
Who knows?

[The muster-bell is heard tolling.]

Scene II.—Same as Scene I, some three hours later.
Everything is tidy, showing Jeanne's work; she turns as
Mademoiselle Mance enters. The latter carries a pile of
old linen, which she places on the table, drawing a chair,
she begins to tear bandages.

Mdlle. Mance. The room reflects your care, my Jeanne.

Jeanne. *Marraine's,*
As calm as some flag-bordered pool, while I,
A frenzied torrent, dash uncertainly [sobbing,]
If none return, what then? [She throws herself on a chair be-
side Mademoiselle Mance, who hands her some linen.]

Mdlle. Mance. Here, take this linen,
Hold it carefully; now tear some strips,
Then roll in even bandages, the hand

Pressed so [*showing how,*] that's better, yes, that's right,
Now think

Of when last year, as those crusading knights
Admired in picture books, our Governor,
With all the Church's solemn-pomp, was made
Protector of the Cross—the Cross in turn
Protects! It beacons from our mountain's brow,
It bruits, our settlement is more than some
Pale, faded leaf the winds may toss aside.

Jeanne. But thirty men against stupendous odds!
I would not lose a single one; nor Pierre;
Nor Jean, who stirred this hornet's nest, a sting
For punishment's enough.

Mdlle. Mance. Their lips might move,
The Devil spoke; chagrined, his subtle brain
Devised this scheme to fend his property,
Such strings of friendly savages baptised,
Requiting our sincerity—to soil
The font he scatters dust, he sows dissensions.

Jeanne. But he, the man I've loved, whose gift I've
spurned,
Until it comes from Christian hands, is truly
Sincere; he says for food and guns some take
French names; but he's not thus convinced, so I,
A Huron woman, remain unwed.

Mdlle. Mance.
You seem; a dainty, woodland nymph portrayed
In old mythologies.

A child

Jeanne. Marraine's astute,
Through books and prayers, a child in aught besides—
This is not rudeness—her heart has never beat
Like mine! and she's my mother's age.

THE BIRTH OF MONTREAL

Mdlle. Mance.

'Tis true

My heart is nunlike, still with human love
I sympathize. The Holy Family
Acknowledges the Man as head, the Woman
The greater one, the Babe supreme! When God
Has stayed this scourge of Iroquois, fair homes
Will sanctify a gladdened Montreal;
May marriage bells oft peal their happy tunes!

Jeanne. Marraine, I hear mine echo now! but faint
Like tinkling whispers, angel-sounds may be.

[A bell is faintly heard, then louder.]

Nay, hark! the bells are real, vicious rumbles
Of dread alarm, our doom is sealed. The foe's
Advancing fast, has overwhelmed our Braves!
Marraine, I grieve your fate! *[Listening.]* Why, now, 'tis joy
That volumes forth, the noisy joy of men
Returned, victorious. *[Exit.]*

Mdlle. Mance. Thank God, they're safe. *[Stooping, she picks up some linen Jeanne has dropped, then calmly continues her work. After a time, enter Jeanne.]*

Jeanne. Not victory, but rout, such wild disorder!
Unrecognized these flying men that fear
Had winged! "The enemy!" our sentry called.
Imprudently one fired the cannon, 'twas trained
That way; but God was merciful! the shot
Missed fire, the charge was poor, else holocaust
For Ville Marie. And Jean came first, brave Jean,
Outrunning Pierre like him whom Jesus loved.
St. Jean! forgive the thought! a laggard else!

Mdlle. Mance. Our Governor?

Jeanne. No wary caribou,
But fierce bull-moose which horns the foe, while seek

Their yard the scatt'ring herd.

[*Enter Jean Robelin and Pierre Laimery, breathless and disordered.*]

We welcome Jean,
Brave Jean and Pierre, dishevelled, but—with legs
That run!

Jean. Your right to jeer I'll not dispute,
Some water though, a dizziness! [*He lies on a beach.*]

Jeanne. [*Fetching a mug of water.*] My gibes
Lose point, when modesty's the target. I'm
Disarmed—if not the Iroquois.

Mdlle. Mance. [*Feeling Jean's pulse.*] Cease jesting,
Have all escaped uninjured? Where's your Captain?

Jean. Jean Mattemal and Pierre Bigot lie dead.
The better Jean and Pierre than we. Our Captain,
This day acclaims his valour, may the Saints
Protect!

[*Enter Jesuit Father.*]

Jesuit Father. [*Addressing Mademoiselle Mance.*] A sad
affair! Guillaume Lebout
Is sinking fast. Nay stay, the ladies, late
From France, suffice to help our worthy surgeon,
Your tender care and knowledge, he requests
For wounds less serious, will send such here
Where space is not so precious. Jeanne returns
With salves and lotions.

[*Exeunt Jesuit Father and Jeanne.*]

*Pierre, who has been leaning against the wall, takes a step
forward.*

Mdlle. Mance.

Quick, this chair, you stumble,

Your sleeve is dripping blood. [*Helping Pierre to a chair, she takes off his coat and turns up the sleeve of his shirt.*]

A nasty wound!

I'll raise your arm; 'twill stay the flow. Would Jeanne
Were back! [*She holds up Pierres' arm.*]

Pierre. As we approached the woods, a silence—
Forebodings rose, unasked; our Chief, though marched
As on parade, we following. Scarce twigs
Were snapped and brushed ere bullets whizzed as from
An unknown source. "To shelter!" cried Monsieur,
Now forest trees each branched a gleaming gun,
Well hid, who pressed the trigger; Shields God plants
For French as Savages! We laughed! the fire
Was hot and heavy. Then a shriek of pain,
A friend lay dead; another; ammunition
Was runnig low; but thirty we against
That whooping crew, two hundred, haply more.
A slow retreat was grimly ordered, facing
From time to time the Iroquois. A nightmare,
That wooded waste, ere reached the beaten track,
Like infantry that flees from cavalry,
Our snow-shoes dropped or ill attached we sank
Each step, while lightly skimmed the enemy.
How gained, God only knows, the road we drag
Those cumbrous logs, whose weight we've oft complained—
But never more. The ground was firm, we sprinted,
Nor looked behind, each man for self; the Saints
Be praised! were lost to sight those hideous
Befeathered, painted beasts.

[*Enter Jeanne, with remedies, which she places on a table. She holds Pierre's arm while Mdlle. Mance attends to the wound.*]

Jeanne. Less frightened some,
They raised and helped the wounded,—he, who made
This possible, attracting to himself,

Has not returned. Mourn, Hochelay, your Chief!
A sacrifice! Mourn Hochelay!

Mdlle. Mance. [*Applying remedies.*] My tears
Will flow when I have viewed his lifeless flesh,
Your supposition's false, God tells me so.

Jeanne. Alive or dead his body will be seen
No more through loving eyes. Alas, our chief!
A vaunted captive! tortured, burnt, then eaten
By vengeful Iroquois.

Mdlle. Mance. Hush, girl, repeat
Some Aves now,—but hark! what noise disturbs?
[*Shouting without, heard faintly, then louder.*]

Jeanne. [*Listening.*] A funeral dirge—how now! what!
Vivat, vivat!
Our Governor, the dead arise! [*Pausing.*] His tread!
Vivat, vivat!

[*Enter Monsieur de Maisonneuve, followed by cheering Colonists.*]

Mdlle. Mance. [*Raising her arms.*] Returned, uninjured,
safe,
Our Soldier of the Cross!

Pierre. The bravest man
In Canada! we voice our reverence.
Vivat! Vivat!

Maisonneuve. [*Sitting down.*] Somewhat tired, my
children,

[*Mademoiselle Mance runs towards him.*]
Attend your wounded, Mademoiselle.

Jeanne [*Feeling him.*]

Monsieur

Is real? He's not a ghost-transparency,
Through which my hand can lightly glide.

Jean.

But how,

Mon Dieu! have you escaped, a single man
Against such frightful odds?

Maisonneuve.

A miracle!

Humbleness permits the tale,—not prowess,
'Twas Heavenly intervention. You, my men,
Deserted me; but God stood by! A slow
Retreat I ordered, fast methinks your flight;
Like rabbits, panic-struck, that fetch their warren,
A sudden vanishing. I faced the foe,
An easy mark; but they now recognized
The Governor of Ville Marie, a prize
To clutch alive, a victim capable
Of suffering, a worthy spectacle
For village feasts. Their chief should boast this capture,
To him alone such honour! Suddenly
He stooped and sprang at me, my pistol missed
Its fire. In fury, towering now, I felt
His breath above, his arms encircled me.
A shot, my second pistol spoilt his triumph,
Unblinking, dead, he fell. And I was free,
The sky and earth were mine! A moment's pause,
Then like my trusty friends, the rabbits here,
I skurried home, though why allowed, beyond
My power to guess.

Jeanne.

To aid our Governor,

They feared a sudden sortie. Their duty, then,
Was plain. The Chief's dead body must receive
Their care, be rescued, avoiding thus all chance
Of ravishment by stranger hands, a trophy
To gloat upon, dishonouring the name
Of Iroquois. Such shame must be prevented,
In carrying away the sad remains,
You, Monsieur, have been forgotten.

Maisonneuve. You've solved
Our riddle, Jeanne. Forgotten!—by friends and foes.
Alike.

Pierre. Monsieur, as long as Montreal
Endures, this combat's writ in memory!

Jean. Monsieur, we yield you homage.

ACT IV.

FULFILMENT.

Scene I.—The street of Ville Marie, near the Parish Church, early in April of the year 1660. The Colonists collect after their day's work. Among them Adam Dollard, who sits on a bench at the back oblivious to his surroundings, Pierre Laimery, Jean Robelin, Jeanne and Anontaha. A fiddler, playing a solemn air, suddenly changes to dance music.

Jean. In France, 'twas last I heard that tune. My feet
Were younger then; they're scarce disabled yet.

Pierre. A dance to welcome spring, so suddenly
'Tis come.

Jean. Sweet June forgets the calendar
Has waked two months ahead. [*Offering his hand to a woman.*]
We'll take some turns
To keep the laughing damsel here. Aha!
[*A few couples take a turn in an old country dance, then stop as the vesper bell rings. Exeunt Pierre Laimery, Jean Robelin and Colonists through the church door.*]

Enter Monsieur de Maisonneuve and Mademoiselle Mance.]

Jeanne. Such jauntiness in Ville Marie! A flash
Proceeds the storm. [*Turning to Anontaha.*] Monsieur
awaits, unfold
Your tale. [*Addressing Mademoiselle Mance.*] Stay, Made-
moiselle, my husband speaks.

Anontaha. These last few moons, a cloud of fear has
dimmed
The hopes of thinking men, the cloud approaches,
Its thunder stirs. I've heard the gathering
Of warriors, their heavy tread resounds;
The French are hardened 'gainst the skirmishers'
Light step; calamity advances now.
In concord march Five Nations, armed with fire
And malice, purposing the White Man's doom.
Eight hundred Iroquois at Roche Fondue,
A vanguard, more are mustering. Your strength
Is man's opposed to Fate; your hour has come.

Mdlle. Mance. "Jesu, Mary, Joseph," are writ within
The corner-stone of our dear parish church;
Three Communities, acknowledging,
Now walk the streets of Ville Marie. The tree
Has branched as visioned once. Its roots are true.

Anontaha. Five Nations raise the tomahawk, what trunk
Withstands their blow?

Mdlle. Mance. The wood of martyrdom,
The gate to Paradise.

Maisonneuve. [*Addressing Anontaha.*] Your news is
surely
Of grave import, a creeping menace now
Reveals its cruel fangs. Prompt action is

The remedy, yet how repel this host?
 I feel my age to-day, [*Sitting on near bench,*] still let me
 think.

Mdlle. Mance. Our dangers have been manifold since
 first,
 In Montreal, the Holy Sacrament
 Was raised, God's stepping stones, I think.—A score
 Of men encamped that summer, eighteen years
 Ago, and we few women, how easily
 The prey of hostile tribes!—our fort was built,
 Our strength increased, before discovery.
 Our dangers have been many, our mercies too!
 Divers times what fears have risen, more victims
 To satisfy the Foe; but Ville Marie
 Still testifies.

Anontaha. [*Addressing Monsieur de Maisonneuve.*] The
 wolf's quick, snapping bite,
 You've parried oft, the bears' upstanding blow.
 Beware! The tortoise now forgets his splash—
 Three families, Five Nations, linked as one.

Mdlle. Mance. My youth grew stern 'mid massacre and
 pillage.
 The Empire's soldiers ravished France; the tides
 Of war beat round Nogent, a frontier town.
 My Mother loved to talk of one Jeanne d'Arc;
 Some sneered and called her witch; the world is thus,
 Ofttimes, the beautiful's misunderstood.
 My Mothers' face would flush with earnestness,
 A maid of seventeen once saved our France,
 God works through humble instruments.

Jeanne. My name
 Is Jeanne, and yours, Marraïne.

Mdlle. Mance. Her name we bear,
 Her stalwart heart is his, who waits, impatience

Scarce bridling. [*Addressing Adam Dollard.*]. Saviour of
 New France, why stay
 You silent?

Dollard. [*Coming forward.*] So, my secret's guessed.

Maisonneuve. To raise
 The voice has ever been a young man's folly,
 He feels his growing weight, forgetting aught
 But self, though selfishness is not your habit,
 My son. Explain your thought, we catch at straws,

Dollard. When this attack was rumoured, sixteen youths,
 And I, engaged to sell our lives, our all,
 That Ville Marie might live. We plan a quick
 Advance to catch the napping foe; our aim
 Thermopylae! our fairest hope!

Maisonneuve. A brave
 Resolve! Too brave, alas! too hazardous!
 We'll first consult the older men, take counsel.

Dollard. I've talked with Major Closse and Charles
 Lemoine.
 "The ground must be prepared and seeded, then
 We'll lead you forth. Our duty's here; postpone
 This enterprise," they say. Where is the use
 Of ploughing, if none to harvest? Our time is now—
 Or never.

Mdlle. Mance. The heart of youth is generous.
 We greet Jeanne d'Arc of Canada!

Dollard. You flatter!
 My past has been, alas! a young man's story,
 A spotted page! pray God the future cleans
 A smut or two; give me that chance, Monsieur.

Maisonneuve. Then search the Notary, the Priest, if bent
On sacrifice, few cares must dim such lustre.

Dollard. Before St. Joseph's altar we intend
A solemn vow, to ask no clemency,
Receive no quarter, fight till death absolves,
My soul at peace!

Maisonneuve. [*Pointing to the Church.*] God's blessing
waits, O Lord,
Have pity! [*Exit through door of Church.*]

Anontaha. [*Addressing Adam Dollard.*] Halt, Mon-
sieur, the French, though brave,
Are poorly versed in ruse and forest craft;
A child's attempt! Take me as guide, some things
I understand!

Dollard. [*From Church steps.*] Protectors, Ville Marie
Requires; not we! our little force is strong
Enough. [*Exit through door of Church.*]

Anontaha. The Pale-face shares his benefits,
But hugs his perils niggardly.

Jeanne. So burns
His torch the brighter. Let its glory flash!
I keep my husband.

Anontaha. Long in memory,
I trust.

Jeanne. Disdained by that proud youth, you ask
Again?

Anontaha. I would, La Mouche, my nephew showed
Such bravery. With forty so-called warriors,
He seeks to catch some straggling Iroquois,

Nor thinks of such attack, yet begs my help.
 The path is plainly blazed—I'll lead these men,
 Awake the ancient Huron fire, the Pale-face
 I'll reinforce, an allied victory!
 But subterfuge—the French go forth alone,
 We follow, meet when danger thickens, sure
 Of welcome smiles.

Jeanne. My smile, tear-laden, bids
 You stay. [*Touching her necklace.*] One necklace, see, and
 only one!
 Most women boast their beaded conquests, string
 On string, by divers hands presented. You
 Alone have fondled me. O Frenchman's God,
 Let others go, though not this Brave who claimed
 Me wife but yesternorn.

Anontaha. Nay, Jeanne, twelve moons
 Of happiness we've known, few boast as much.

Jeanne. Twelve moons of happiness, what winter frosts
 For such short summer! Twelve moons of happiness!

Anontaha. You sob. Is't grief or joy or mingled
 weather?

Jeanne. Stay, stay with me! My love's a sickly thing;
 Do you break through its cords.

Anontaha. Its cords are firm
 And pure and true, through sacrifice their strength.
 We're Christians, Jeanne; see, girl, you beckoned, yet
 I stayed till Faith acquired my right to hold
 You thus [*Taking Jeanne in his arms*] through endless moons
 of happiness;
 Our parting's brief, one kiss—farewell, my wife!
 [*Breaking from his wife, he strides away. Exit.*]

Jeanne. O Mary, how I suffer! [*Calling*] Husband! He
Has gone. Has never turned a backward glance.
[*She sinks on a bench, weeping bitterly.*]

Scene II.—*Same as Scene I, nearly two months later. Mdle.*
Mance sits on a bench, reading some letters newly arrived
from France.

[*Enter Monsieur de Maisonneuve.*]

Maisonneuve. From La Fleche your news? Dauversiere?

Mdlle. Mance. Monsieur, he's dead! ..

Maisonneuve. A world in ashes, then!
These seventeen dear youths, d'Ailleboust, and now
Our founder! All, all are dead.—What rumours fly,
The certainty of things has lost its hold;
This seeming God-directed sacrifice
Has roused the foe to fury-pitch. The mill,
Our two redoubts, the hospital, the fort,
Our homes, what thought can strengthen them against
The vengeance gathering? The Church's prayers,
May be, if such God's will, interpreted
Aright. But read your news, I'll strive to follow—
My mind though jumps from this weak point to that.

Mdlle. Mance. 'Tis from the Baron, dated last November.
He writes while fresh impressed, no incident's
Too trivial, all precious jewels; still,
I'll skim his words to suit anxiety.

Maisonneuve. [*Sitting down.*] A man revived, you
fancied?

Mdlle. Mance. Yes, last June,
As eighteen years ago, his cheering presence
Forced back the tears that welled for France. Between

Our ship and land the water broad'ned, the shore
 Grew faint and fainter; that dear face ablaze
 With righteous love, no exigence can dim,
 No foolish doubt can conquer. Yes, his work,
 Like Father Olier's, was finished; he
 Had blessed his nursing daughters, waved farewell
 Upheld, we sailed together; and here we stay,
 Though stressed with poverty, though Iroquois
 Disquiet us.

Maisonnewe. A pretty word: "disquiet,"
 Beneath a threatened avalanche!—Proceed.

Mdlle. Mance. A short respite was lent God's Servant,
 thus
 Enabling him to fill his mission, help
 Secure his prophesies of Montreal.
 He watched our ship that jemmed the distance, then
 He turned, and lo! his maladies assailed
 Afresh! 'twas martyrdom! all slipped from him
 But sense of suff'ring. His torments racked and gnawed
 And fought for conquest—at last he weakened, was
 Confined to bed, and there he lay some months,
 A skeleton whose cov'ring formed a mass
 Of putrid flesh; but draw the veil o'er man's
 Corruption, brightly shone the Faith that nought
 Could tarnish. His friends were lost, his reputation,
 Misunderstood, involved in debt, yet dying
 His wasted hands were meekly crossed, his face
 Serene!

Maisonnewe. May God's great Servant intercede
 This day for Ville Marie!

Mdlle. Mance. Assuredly,
 His faith is ours! A story well explains
 Our sainted foundèr. A blessing once was offered;
 His then Confessor bade him choose the Grace

That sinneth not. "My Father," he replied,
"This life is but a striving toward perfection,
A looking upward, how expect to scale
The height ere Heav'n be reached; but Faith's a light
From which ill shadows flee, whose lantern man
May clasp."

[*Enter Jeanne, carrying a basket laden with herbs and trailing greens.*]

Jeanne. Hold! hold it high! Our Ville Marie
Has need, yet what care I for Ville Marie,
My husband's dead! [*She bursts into tears.*]

Mdlle. Mance. Poor girl, your grief is young,
To envy him's permissible, not weep
A Christian's death.

Jeanne. [*Throwing flowers from her basket.*] Then let
us strew the ground
With flowers! The Iroquois advance with gifts
Of torture, massacre; we offer scalps,
Securing Christian death though scarce, I think,
A Christian burial.

Maisonnette. [*Rising.*] Unholy talk! [*Exit.*]

Jeanne. [*Picking flowers from the ground.*] Poor
flowers! why suffer for my sorrow. You
Were plucked to deck our Lady's altar. See!
Gay, dancing columbine, blood-red, and here's
A fallen star! I saw it flash the skies
Late yesternight, a token never touched
Before by human hands.

Mdlle. Mance. A dandelion!
Dear, homely weed that sings of peace and France,
What child has puffed the time of day, what wind

Our first, then sweetly framed from birchen bark;
Wondering he glanced around; his eyes
Attracted by Our Lady's—long he gazed
Entranced, this statue speaks that memory.

Mdlle. Mance. And speaks the Sculptor's purity; but why
Was he so stubborn then, so proud, so primed
With argument, refusing till last year
The privilege of baptism; you, his sponsor!

Jeanne. Anontaha said: "The Frenchman's God
Is just; but Manitous are plentiful,
Ours teach the truth." The Black Robe said: "Take good
From yours, a higher good from God Almighty."
Anontaha said: "Our wise old men
Exhort to righteousness; at festivals,
Amid the sacrificial dance and song,
Discourses point the way, their teaching's followed."
The Black Robe said: "'Tis good, our wisdom's better."
Anontaha said: "The beasts have souls."
The Black Robe harshly shook his head. Discouraged
My husband turned aside. The laws of Christ
Were not his stumbling block; but how desert
Our friends, the beasts, allies from dawn of time.
O weary moons of troubled thought! At length
The simple goodness shown by Montrealers,
Self sacrifice, heroic deeds unsung,
Converted him whose ancestor, long since,
Was named the one good man of Hochelay,
Remembered still with pride—my husband's dead!

Mdlle. Mance. Poor Jeanne, glad Jeanne! A golden
book records
Your husband's merit, strive to imitate
His worth!—Those herbs require attention though,
Their care should wake the mind from grief. They've come
In answer to our prayer. Herbs so gathered
In healing flesh, will heal a wounded heart.

THE BIRTH OF MONTREAL

[Exit Jeanne. Mademoiselle Mance turns to her letter.

Enter Sister Marguerite Bourgeois.]

Sister Bourgeois. An ardent flame's extinguished, God's
great Servant
Receives his crown, his exile's finished! This news
Has come from France, they say.

Et

Mdlle. Mance. And our foundation
Has vanished, shipwrecked with our Founder's fortune.
Ah, well! Our Lady Poverty's a stern,
But wholesome Councillor.

Sister Bourgeois. [Sitting down.] The sweetest friend!
I dread this talk, a vaster Montreal,
Some day a city sprung from Ville Marie.—
Few dream of that to-day, 'tis true; each house
Is barricaded. Our Huron scouts have been
Detained—

Mdlle. Mance. From martyrdom none shrink; but all
Must guard our mission-work, must watch its growth.
When God has stayed these threatenings, then let
Us build in humbleness, and trust the future.
A happy augury your stable-school;
The little lives unfold where Christ was born—
Within a manger. Indians and French
Are grouped together, one family! one hope!

Sister Bourgeois. Another fear, if heretics, some day,
Should find an entrance here as in Quebec.

Mdlle. Mance. The Saints forbid; yet once in La
Rochelle
I housed, unwittingly, with Huguenots.
Discovering my error, I spent the night
In frightened prayer; next day, I found safe lodging;

But since have thought my hostess kind, though pained
 To note such fear of her; and that last voyage
 To France, when hymns were sung by these protesters,
 How I blenched; yet looking back, their faces
 Were kind as hers, their conduct, too, was mild,
 Reproachless, Dutch Calvinists in Orange Fort
 Once saved the life of Father Jogues. He spoke
 Of them with love, then why should we fear stain,
 Let prayer suffice!

Sister Bourgeois. And penitence!

Mdlle. Mance.

What Saint's

Austerity surpasses yours, my Sister?
 Your food, too hot, too cold, with cinders sprinkled;
 Your lips, but once a day with water moistened;
 Your mattress, board; a hurtful block for pillow;
 Your sleep, but pause 'twixt all-night orisons,
 And not content, the sorry inner-cap
 That bristles pins! I shudder from the thought,
 Though I have known the ecstasy of pain.

Sister Bourgeois. Your suffering was past endurance!
 Only

A miracle has cured that withered arm!
 Your usefulness is still required.—Divulge
 To none my secrets. O, if God were touched
 To save one sinner through my feeble efforts,
 These pin-points soft as cushioned-feathers.

[*Enter Pierre Laimery.*]

Pierre.

'Tis strange

To find you loit'ring here, who never waste
 A moment's breath. Ah, letters! once their seals
 I tore with hope, found bitterness within.
 And now they cease to come. Who cares? Not I!
 A petty thing man's grief, that years can wash

Away.—But these commands and countermands
 Have so confused, I scarcely know which one
 Was spoken last, or what's my latest errand;
 The Hurons 'scaped tell different tales; but all
 Assert the maddened foe's approaching. 'Twere well
 You laid those letters by and screened yourselves,
 Though what can shelter 'gainst these coming hordes?

[*Enter Chehteh.*]

Chehteh.

Three kings from Eastern lands, and two have won
 The Frenchman's crown! I bear glad tidings! Hail!
 Your mighty slain!—Announce my presence, I,
 Once Chehteh, Paul baptised. Let all assemble,
 Your Chief esteems his old ally.

[*Exit Pierre Laimery.*]

[*Chehteh picks up the Madonna left by Jeanne, after examining it, he places it prominently on a post.*]

That toy's

A subtle piece of work, the drapery,
 And, ah, the smile! why 'tis the Manitou
 Of Ville Marie! well may she smile this day!

[*Enter Monsieur de Maisonneuve followed by some of the Colonists, others assemble later.*]

Maisonneuve. Our trusty Paul, your open face bespeaks
 A mind that's free from treachery, yet 'tis
 Unwise to gather here; one word, your news?

Chehteh.—Great Chief, rejoice, though I, a Huron, weep,
 Your tribe will prosper, multiply, while mine,
 A craven remnant, slinks to earth.

Maisonneuve.

Your news?

Chehtch. The Iroquois retreat with silent drums,
With vaunting songs unsung, with lagging steps.

Maisonneuve. Incredible! I fail to follow!—your speech
Is meaningless. [*Noticing the Madonna.*] Whence came that
statue, there?

Madonna radiant; look, look! She smiles!
A miracle! You speak the truth, good Paul,
My words are blocked with gratitude. O God!
Accept our humble thanks. Heroic blood's
Not spilt in vain. [*A pause, while all kneel in silent prayer.*]

Your story, Paul, how come
These hordes of Iroquois, embittered, stung
By Dollard's check, to turn from victory
Assured, their vengeance unappeased.

Chehtch.

False tales

You've heard from Huron fugitives, deserters,
Ashamed of truth. Forget their names. One Brave,
Anontaha, wakes our ancient fame.
With forty warriors he met the Pale-face,
With Mitiwemeg, great Algonquin Chief
And his three followers. The Captain Dollard
Smiled welcome, called the Red man, brother. There,
Long Sault, where tossing waters steal the quiet
From forest-gloom, a blackened clearing glowed
With bright camp-fires; the kettles spluttered cheer
That helped to magnify a weak defence,
The little palisaded fort, half ruined.
Suspense was lulled by sweet hymn-tunes that pierced
The noisy, drumming rapids, caught the chaunt
Of mating birds and breathed the will to high
Exploit. Asudden two canoes approached
Above, our people fired; alas! some few
Escaped to carry tidings; soon there swarmed
Three hundred Iroquois, our Braves were pressed
Within that frail redoubt, their kettles spilt,
Dry-throated must they fight, dry-throated bear

Their wounds, My tribesmen failed the test. La Mouche
Grew restive, tempted by fair promises,
He leapt the barricade, surrendering,
By twos and threes the caitiff Hurons followed.
Anontaha stayed—forget the rest!
The four Algonquins too held high their heads.
The enemy were reinforced, eight hundred
Assailants, seasoned warriors all, and yet
That sturdy band of Montrealers, reeling
From sheer exhaustion, faced unflinchingly
Each maddened onset, till war-whoops turned to moans,
Till Iroquois were thinned by death, then swerved
And faltered.

Maisonneuve. Then? What then?

Chehteh.

“Enough,” some counselled;

But others said: “Eternally disgraced
Should we return, acknowledging defeat,
Eight hundred pitted 'gainst this paltry few.
The trial-faggots then were bunched and thrown,
A breathless pause—who stooped and gathered them,
Great Braves, afraid of cowardice, not death.
Behind their mighty shields these men advanced,
The heartened multitude, a cloud of strength,
Enveloping. Poor Montrealers! still
Undaunted! their loopholes flashed a constant fire
That mowed fell lanes; yet undeterred, o'er mounds
Of quiv'ring flesh, the Iroquois now climbed;
A breach was made; young Dollard crammed and plugged
A musketoon, he lit the fuse and far
He hurled, alas it failed the palisade,—
Confusion, wounds and death!—nor quarter asked,
Nor given, hand to hand the fighting, yells
Of victory; though triumph faded soon,
One victim faintly stirred, the rest had passed
Beyond all spite, all power to torture, yes,
Our Braves are dead; but hark! if seventeen

French striplings, four Algonquins, one great Huron,
Behind a tott'ry picket shelter, held
Thus long eight hundred Iroquois at bay,
How hope to capture Montreal, much less
Quebec!—Their squaws may weep sad losses, we
Rejoice! Our Ville Marie has stemmed the tide!
The White-Man's Manitou is Chief of chiefs!

Colonists.

Almighty God! our prayer is granted!
Saved to build thy citadel.
In Montreal, each stone that's carried,
Meekly borne, let none rebel!

Nor riches asked, nor earthly pleasures,
Christ once lived in Nazareth,
Let mortal flesh absorb His spirit,
Service wakes from living death!

*

[*The audience and Colonists unite in singing "O Canada."*]

THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS

CHARACTERS.

Bertram	<i>An Unsuccessful Poet</i>
Nan	<i>His Little Friend</i>
Adam	<i>A Multimillionaire</i>
Eve	<i>His Wife</i>
Sam	<i>A Gardener</i>
Felicia	<i>Who Owns the Key</i>
Frank	<i>A Kindly Editor</i>
Louise	<i>His Fashionable Sister</i>

Time: Christmas, 1920.

ACT I.

Scene.—Montreal; a poorly furnished attic bedroom of a tenement after dark on Christmas eve. It contains a bed, a wash-stand, a battered trunk, two chairs, a table, bearing a lighted lamp, littered with papers. Prominently on a shelf, laden with books, is a large photograph of a girl in evening dress. Some books are also piled on the floor. Bertram is seated beside the table. He stops writing and takes up a picture post card that has lately come from an artist friend in Florida.

Bertram. I envy him who owns such beauty! There
I'd lie beside that lily pond where Fancy
Should spare my courting; yes, I see her now
In rainbow garb, 'mid tropic shrubs, scarf dancing.
Tiptoe she stands then whirls with butterflies,
A ballet worth the seeing! Peals of laughter,
Dazzling sunshine, scarlet brilliance glimpsed
Through lustrous green, the scent of bride's bouquet,
'Tis all a joyous riot. Orange trees
Invite the picking. Ah, dear Fancy, toss
a golden ball! 'Tis Christmas eve, I thirst—

[*Enter Nan, with an orange, which she offers Bertram*]

So Fancy's real, yes, an orange too!—
My head is tired and wayward thoughts play pranks.

Nan. You're feverish?

Bertram. [Paring the orange] May be, 'tis Christmas eve!

An orange feast we'll spread, let us carouse;
We'll drown such things as hunger, care, sad chance,
And memory. Tenacious memory
That rudely tugs the heart at Christmas tide,
A commonplace as darkness sprung from night,
As some poor unsuccessful poet housed
In garret room, a painful commonplace;
But here's a feast to quench all melancholy,
Twelve even parts; if thirteen, what a quarrel
There might have been! The Fates, at least, have spared
Us that. I'll suck their health and yours, sweet Fancy

Nan. A pretty name! Would it were truly mine,
Then I should wear a velvet dress, all trimmed
With fur, clocked-stockings, high heeled shoes, a hat
That droops long trailing feathers. How I'd mince
My steps and stare you out of countenance,
Stare till you became as dust beneath
My feet.

Bertram. No pleasant Fancy that, so Nan,
Plain Nan, my comrade Nan, you shall remain,
With mischief eyes and rosy lips—a kiss
I'd steal could I but conjure mistletoe
To lend old time authority.

Nan. Poor Poet,
One kiss I'd freely give and others too
Did you but truly wish for them. My eyes
Are moist with something more than fun; but yours
Are blind, why as I speak your thoughts have slipped
Away. They're with that precious photograph,
An actress, haply some fine lady, who
Forgets her rank and station, to smile on such
As you.

Bertram. The smile reflects her pride—aloft
The sun engulfs the steeps and vales alike
With shifting radiance, itself unmoved.

Nan. Then turn to lesser worth; but no, a poet
Must sigh for what is unattainable,
Unnoticing when others sigh for him.

Bertram. Enough of sighs on Christmas eve, see what
Is here, a card from Florida.

Nan. [Examining the card, then holding it from her].
'Tis as
Your friend, the artist paints, all dots and blotches
That dance to form when seen afar; a pond
I now discern, strange shrubs, vibrating sunshine.
The sun may well be proud it lavishes
Such cheer. I would the trees showed plainer what
They were, like greenhouse palms grown high they seem.

Bertram. The sunlight's pictured here, what matters else?
A warmth this little post card gives, 'tis like
True rhythmic verse that seeks the heart of things,
Nor cares if outward form be round or square.
If life were only rhythmic too; but how
Adjust my soul to ugliness? this sordid,
Ill-flavoured poverty.

Nan. At heart you feel
Superior, disdainng those who cope
With poverty, that's like to conquer you.
Superior! and yet the tenement
Has small esteem for you, why even Uncle,
Who drinks and curses luck for faults his own,
Has earned enough for Christmas mirth; but you,
With lowered head and coat grown loose, creep up
The stairs while gossips pity you who scorn
The useful trades to scribble, scribble, scribble.

Bertram. [With a weary movement.] Run off, your talk is tiring.

Nan.

Poet, how

I tease! and yet I'd help you, too. Could you
But write advertisements, you'd have some coins
To click and crinkly dollar bills to smooth
And fold. Such stuff as this will never pay;
I'll take a piece at random. [Lifting a sheet of paper from the
table, she reads:]

O Fancy, cool fingered, caresses I crave
To waken one moment from penury's grave;
Discomfort has deadened the tune of my thought,
Though noises, ill odours to nothingness brought.

O Fancy, hush silent the rumble of towns
Where men are machines or as giddy as clowns;
O change the street roar to the soft swish of waves
That break against rocks, against seaweedy caves.

O Fancy, play havoc with walls that confine,
Breathe freedom from ocean that's belted with pine;
The sea-gull is swooping, there flits a taut sail,
The open's before me and fair winds prevail.

O Fancy, hide squalor with trappings of gold,
The gold that is garnered as stories unfold;
Let hopes of the future, let dreams of the past
Assuage the sad present with visions that last.

Bertram. Though you may criticize, your reading's good.

Nan. I've heard you oft enough repeat such things,
Besides I've practised too, 'tis not so hard
This poetry as one's inclined to think.
We talk our thoughts aloud, the ear corrects
The sound. I've written verse myself, well now,
Why must you laugh? It's not so bad, although,

In vain, I sought to catch the moan that sobs
Through much of yours. [Taking a paper from her belt.]

I've ventured this, a love-song,

'Tis over cheery I'll admit and then

'Tis somewhat short; but nothing more would come.

[Reading:]

I'm going to marry an esquimau,

To burrow with him beneath the snow

'Till we reach the cave where crystals grow

And the polar bear howls at night.

Our pockets we'll stuff with chocolate cake

And there we'll find ices and walrus steak,

We'll peck and we'll munch, no punishing ache

For a kindly appetite.

Our beds will be cushioned with costly fur

While swinging oil-lamps will softly blurr

And the crystals will twinkle: "No need to stir,

Long months form an arctic night."

Bertram. Bravo! good! You wrote that by yourself?

Nan. What puzzles me, whence come these thoughts,
what drives

Us then to write.

Bertram. I like that "us," it augurs

A wise conceit. Whence come these thoughts I know

No more than you, some chance encounter, some

Stray words once read—but instinct marshals them

And bids them forth.

Nan.
Is telling me.

Another self, I feel,

Bertram. Look there! that sullied web;
The spider lurks complacently. Think you

She wonders how those threads, tenacious yet
 So fine, are patterned evenly; does she
 Puff out her ugly frame and say: "'tis I
 Who planned this fragile lace that traps my food."
 Or does she shrink to almost nothingness,
 Acknowledging the Prompter's voice; why no,
 She works that she may eat and eats that she
 May work and that's the whole of it; what boots,
 To question how the thing is done? It runs
 So easily;—with man, how different!
 When that same instinct bids him string ideas,
 The fly, his bread and butter, oft escapes;
 And then he broods and wonders.

Nan. And well he may,
 If his word-web be no more true than what's
 Above, dust strands! The spider's industry
 Is stayed until we fling our windows wide
 To court a stifling breeze.

Voice without. Nan! Nan!

Nan. I come!
 Good night; my poet, here's a thought that comforts.
 The spider has long hours of weariness
 When insect-game is scarce; but that's a part
 Of life, she says, and patiently she waits.

Voice without. Nan! Nan! Where is the girl?

Bertram. Your mother waits,
 But not so patiently, now off with you!
[Exit Nan.]

I'm best alone. The postman twice has passed.
 I've listened! Tomorrow's Christmas, Sunday then,
 Two fallow days to drag their length. I'll turn
 My feeling into verse, make use of sad
 Necessity;—but how expect the words

To flow? When one's embittered, underfed. [Writing.]

A hope once sprang to lusty being,
A playful, dancing, joyous hope,
It whispered of a world worth-seeing,
It glorified the singer's scope.

A sickly hope now tantalizes
Where disillusion spreads a pall,
A hope that gravely recognizes
Though man may fly, he's apt to fall,

A sickly hope, a sickly poem! well!
What matters that or anything! I'm tired,
Tired, tired—

[Enter Nan, with paper and letter.]

Nan. 'Tis I, your Nan, confessing shame,
A letter came this noon, and I forgot.
Its fat and bulky, Christmas cards, I think.
A paper, too, with coloured supplement.
I'd like to stay; but then I'm Santa Claus;
The children's stockings must be filled and so
I wrap the nuts and sweets in packages;
They're more surprising thus—and fewer needed.
Now read the jokes but nothing serious.
I wish you pleasant dreams, a merry Christmas!
A merry Christmas!

[Exit.]

Bertram. [Opening the letter.] Yes, my manuscript's
Returned! I never wrote a better poem.
I waited till I felt assured my work
Would please, "returned with thanks." Why can't they say
What's wrong with it. This printed slip may mean:
"Poor self-deluded fool!" May only mean
"We're overstocked with verse at present, seek
A more propitious time." And yet my ballads
Have found a publisher, alas the cheque's

Forgotten, the taking though presumes some merit,
Unless 'twas done to pleasure me, to stay
My importunity. [Walking over to the photograph.] Louise
has never

Replied nor thanked. I thought at least she'd write,
Would understand herself inspired the book,
Would feel the homage trembling through each line,
Would shed a tear; but no, my gift is tossed
Aside, long since forgot the seedy poet,
Who once dared lift his eyes to her, who dropped
Them instantly, so slight a fault for such
A punishment—unreal hope and restless
Imagining. Who'd think this tender smile
Was barbed with such unkind offence? Tonight
A strange benumbing steels 'gainst woe itself. [Sitting down.]
I'll see what's in this paper, then prepare
For bed. The copy's marked! What birth or death
Can interest me? perhaps a marriage? Why
My book's reviewed! Would Nan were here! I feel
A different man. Her wish comes true, a merry—
A merry—no, it cannot be, its some
Mistake, another's book, not mine. "Too crude
To dignify with print"—"a sloppy style,"
My one false rhyme's discovered, held to scorn,
Some injudicious, joke-intended words
Are fully quoted, tagged as earnest work,
A sample of my ignorance. No mention
Of gentle cadences that sprang to life
As water oozing from a secret source,
No mention of those sturdy, ringing lines
Whose birththrob thumped and shook my inward self!
All curtained with the silence of contempt.
O God! deserving that or worse; mayhap
A sickening failure; hopeless, helpless, this
The end of everything, dread realized,—
The walls are rocking, floor and ceiling move,
My eyes grow dim, the darkness spreads—
[He falls forward, his head resting on the table. The lamp
flickers and goes out.]

ACT II.

Scene.—Florida; by the lily pond in the grounds of a multimillionaire. Canaries cleverly caged amid the bushes are heard singing. The art of the landscape gardener is seen in the arrangement of banana, grape fruit and orange-trees, banked by clumps of flowering shrubs. There are some palms, one with a dead branch, a mountain ebony, a holly tree enswathed with Spanish moss. There is also a rustic bench beside the pond. Bertram is discovered moving aimlessly as though walking in his sleep. When he reaches the lily pond he starts and seems to awaken.

Bertram. The lily pond! How came I here? Was't dream

Or waking thought that drove my steps, that slipped
Me past all barriers? I breathe! I stretch!
I feel life's vigour! nought besides is real;
The past is blotted history, the future's
A vague unwritten scroll. The present though
Exists, is mine, the precious gift of being,
Of eager consciousness! I'll taste and smell
And hear and touch and see the wonders strewn
Around, accept the moment's blessedness,
Nor question aught. Bananas in abundance!
Great yellow tassels drooping low, and some
Already ripe. I'll sample one, delicious,
How weird their shaggy leaves, and oh! those palms
Whose glossy branches, spendthrift sunlight sprays
With glitt'ring gems! and there the grape fruit hangs,

Its saffron globes are bunched like giant grapes,
 And here's a tree sweet-tipped with mauvish bloom,
 Its leaves are patterned from the butterflies,
 Which gayly flaunt the happiness that's culled
 From countless flowers. Canaries fill the air
 With fluted notes; their cage, a shrubbery,
 Light-fenced with wire. A thousand blended perfumes
 Suggest repose! [He lies on the grass, beside the pond.] How
 quaintly beautiful
 These water lilies, purple discs, with hearts
 Of gold. I'll rest in lazy wonderment
 And watch the carp; to feel the grass again,
 Why that repays long years of suffering.
 What's this? a trinket dropped or tossed aside
 'Tis faintly lettered, seems to read: "This key
 Unlocks the human heart." Were't truly so,
 What fairer gift would serve a poet's need.

[*Enter Adam, with a dog that jumps on him, then runs
 and sniffs Bertram.*]

Adam. Down, Fido, down, poor dog! these holidays
 Are apt to drag. You sniff a friend, why no,
 A stranger!—Thief or simple trespasser,
 We welcome you. Perchance you wish to sketch
 The lily pond. Last year an artist tramp
 Slipped through the gate. You much resemble him,
 Though somewhat shabbier.

Bertram. You're then the Adam
 Who owns this Paradise! I envy you!
 To lie beside this lily pond, to think
 Or doze—

Adam. [*Sitting on the bench.*] 'Twould grow monotonous
 in time,
 Besides the bench is handier, less risk
 From prying ants. To doze! 'tis sensible,

A pastime I'll condone. To think! at best
'Tis troublesome, stirs discontent and leads
To anarchy; at worst, 'tis out of fashion,
In highest circles quite unknown. I fear
You've Bolsheviki-tendencies. What is
Your purpose here?

Bertram. For answer question Fate
Not me, for purposeless I came.

Adam. Your thinking
Is harmless then; how chanced you here?

Bertram. As well
Ask yonder drifting cloud what winds have shaped
Its course.

Adam. Your brain is clouded. I had thought
As much.

Bertram. What's cloud and what's intelligence
I've never fairly grasped. This key may give
Some clue; 'tis doubtless yours?

Adam. You found it here?

Bertram. But now, I smoothed the cool, soft grass and
touched
Wee starry flowers, asudden flashed the joy
That's rightly mine and in my hand I clutched
This golden toy. [*Offering the key.*]

Adam. Most curious! a key
Of strange design, inscribed; but sadly blurred,
"This key unlocks," what's this? "the human heart."
Unlocks the human heart! No property
Of mine that savours of immodesty;
We clothe our bodies, how much more the something

That lies within.

Bertram. You asked how chanced I here,
My purpose; proving thus man's ignorance.
A simpler question I'll propound to you,
Like yours unglossed by novelty, would you,
Who own so much of earthly loveliness,
If choice were yours, repeat your youth again?
For age is still far distant.

Adam. Yes and yes,
A thousand times; but O so different!
Mistakes and broken promises and all
Those ugly things that rear their heads when we
Make pause, not one of them should trouble me.

Bertram. Would you repeat your youth with all its
follies,
Its happenings unchanged?

Adam. A bitter thought
"The might have been" and none more bitter, so
Why rake the murky past, odd moments come
Of gayety; horse racing, cards, a glass
Or two, alleviations I'll admit;
O life's not all a funeral; but why
This waste of breath, when "no" will answer you.
Take back your key! [*Throwing Bertram the key.*] The day
was dull enough,
God knows, but now 'tis mired past reckoning.
Your game's exposed, a journalist who seeks
Some copy; intimate particulars
Of Adam Swain, the multimillionaire,
Interviewed by ruse on Christmas Day.
Shows discontent, etcetera! 'Twill scarce
Do harm. Where fiction puffs itself as truth,
Truth may tamely pass unrecognized.

Bertram. You flatter me, who am a minor poet,

An unsuccessful one at that.

Adam. I might
Have guessed! The gloom that's in most poetry
Pervades the air. My wife will welcome you
And it. She's bitten with the same complaint,
A fellow sufferer! I'll take my leave, [*rising*]
The dog needs exercise. Come Fido, thank
The Lord, you've never learned to read or write.

[*Enter Sam, in overalls, with ladder and saw.*]

Why, Sam, your overalls discredit Christmas,
The day deserves a festive heart, at least,
A change of clothes, some slight pretence.

Sam. Sundays,
Mondays, workdays, holidays, my heart
Beats evenly—but now it almost ceased
To beat, a stranger's here?

Adam. I'll introduce
This gentleman, a poet, not immortal
As yet, although he floats on airy wings.
My wife may fancy him. Good morning, Sir,
[*Exit Adam.*]

Sam. I trust she may; but pardon me, your clothes
Are far less Christmassy than mine and she
Is most particular! I've known her since
Her childhood days, an elfish, prankish thing;
But now she's like the clock—Miss Eve, I call
Her still, though she was married eighteen months
Before we joined the war and helped to win.
Time passes faster when each hour is struck,
To lighten irksomeness she maps her day:
At nine she sips her chocolate, at ten
She's up and fully dressed, eleven brings

Her here to feed the carp, they're nosing now
 Expectantly. From twelve to one she strolls
 Amid the flowers, then lunch, a nap—but I've
 My work, this branch is dead, offends the eye;
 A withered sight would trouble her. [*He steadies the ladder
 against the palm and mounts with his saw.*]

Bertram. I like
 That tawny branch, the sun is gilding it,
 A hint of death, a hint of what's beyond!
 So let it stay.

Sam. [*Sawing the dead branch.*] Though introduced,
 and that
 Most graciously, the Colonel's tone gave not
 The slightest hint commands from you should be
 Obeyed.

Bertram. [*Watching the sawing.*] I had not thought a
 palm tree's branch
 Would call for such an effort.

Sam. Aye, a palm's
 The toughest thing, I trow; unless perchance
 The Colonel's latest friend.—Take care! or else
 The falling branch may finish you, a hint
 Of what's beyond! [*The branch drops with a thud.*]

[*Enter Eve, unnoticed by Bertram.*]

Bertram. [*Raising the branch with difficulty.*] So slender
 looking, yet
 I scarce can lift the thing! 'Tis most deceptive;
 But what is not?

Eve. [*Addressing Sam.*] Who's this philosopher?
 A friend of yours?

Sam. [*Descending the ladder.*] He's hardly that; but now

I found him with the Colonel, where the Colonel
Discovered him I've not the least idea.
He thought may be you'd fancy him, a poet
Who hopes to be immortal yet who likes
A hint of death.

Eve. [*Clasping her hands.*] A real poet! then
My dearest hope's fulfilled! I write myself,
A smattering; but feel in need of some
Advice.

Sam. The carp are waiting anxiously;
You've but to call, [*suggestively*] I'll stay near by.

[*Exit Sam, dragging the fallen branch.*]

Eve. Yes, first
We'll feed the gold fish. Take these crumbs. You throw
A piece, now I. Look you, how prettily
They crowd. A special bit for that wee wriggler.
And this! I often feel I'm in some poem
Myself, while bending here.

Bertram. And so you are!
Your dress and hair and every part of you
Agree with purple lilies, palms reflected,
And golden fish.

A lady, a naiad, a nymph, who knows?
Soft garbed in the palest green.
Whence amethyst veiling, that loosely flows,
Encircles its satined sheen.

A lady, a naiad, a nymph, who knows?
Mayhap she's a fairy queen,
Aetherial vision caprice bestows
To sweeten this lovely scene!

Eve. You are a poet! Why, in other minds,

Some day this scene may dwell, and I remembered!

[While Eve is searching in her basket for a gold backed tablet, Bertram eats the bread that still remains in his hand.]

Please write those lines and add some more. Have you
A pencil? Here's a pad! First let me tear
My scribblings off, my poor attempts. *[Looking up.]* You've
eaten
The fishes' bread, that proves your worth—to be
So absent-minded.

Bertram. Proves my worth or proves
My non-success! I wonder which! The bread
Was excellent, home baked, I think. The fish
Eat every day, but I—pray take no notice,
A foolish jest, and here's another, though
Of this I'm not so sure.—A little key
Some crinolined and powdered dame might once
Have used upon an old enamelled watch,
An heirloom, dropped by you, provided you're
Of mortal birth; I found it here beside
The lily pond.

Eve. *[Taking the key.]* How strange, 'twas never mine,
An antique key of rare design, the chasing's
Exquisite, a tiny scroll with words
Intwined, 'tis well my eyes are still undimmed
By age! "This key unlocks the human heart."
Unlocks the human heart? Some talisman
You've disinterred from centuries long past,
Whose power has rusted years ago, dissolved
Through change of time, 'tis Christmas, nineteen hundred
And twenty, who believes in charms today?

Bertram. We'll test its potency to draw the truth
From one well disciplined, through social usage,

To hide her inward self. Would you who have
The things most women fondly crave; youth, beauty,
Fine clothes, position, wealth untold, would you,
If choice were yours, repeat the past, drag out
The present.

Eve. No! and no! You frighten me.

Bertram. Suppose yourself a child again, or, let
Us say, a soul unborn; before you stretch
Life's many ways, their pitfalls plainly-marked,
Their pleasant turnings clearly shown, would you
Step forward or-- sink back to nothingness?

Eve. You frighten me, but life at best is boredom,
At worst 'tis suffering. I would not live.
Take back your key, a chilly wind is blowing;
The shade is dangerous to-day, and I'm
Unwrapped; I dread a cold and its results.
To die, would that improve my state? Far better
The nothingness of nought, the never being
Than life with teasing thought, with harsh surmise.
Take back your key that delves beneath, destroys
The decent coverings of ugliness.
Take back your key! [*She throws the key to Bertram and
calls*], Sam! Sam! I wish he'd come,
[*After a pause enters Sam.*]

Sam. You need my help. I thought as much.

Eve. Please show
This gentleman the gate, the nearest toward
The circus green; a tricky mesmerist,
A mountebank has forced an entrance here;
The Colonel's friend, I understand, not mine.
[*Exit Eve.*]

Sam. The lady does not fancy you, that's clear,

But what has angered her? I stayed to listen,
 Till honied phrases proved too much, in self
 Defence I fell asleep. A clash awakes
 One's interest; but bandied compliments
 Are dull.

Bertram. I merely sought some information;
 This little key unlocks the human heart.
 I asked the Colonel's wife would she repeat
 Her life with all its blessings, would she choose
 A fairer lot if such were possible.

Sam. Most indiscreet! the rich are fond of meddling,
 They question poorer folk; but when the poor
 Make awkward queries, stares and haughtiness
 Result. Now I would answer you nor feel
 The least offence—put back your charm—I talk
 To exercise my wit. I'd gladly live
 My seventy odd years again, the same
 Or different or any other way,
 So long as I be human flesh and God's
 Above and that's the long and short of it.

Bertram. Your life has been a happy one?

Sam. Of that
 I greatly doubt, just so and so; an ambling,
 With now and then a fall.

Bertram. A humdrum sort
 Of thing.

Sam. May be, may be, but satisfying
 Enough.

[*A faint whistling is heard, exciting the canaries to louder song.*]

Bertram. I hear a tune, a whistling sound,

More like a negro melody than trill
Of prisoned birds; awaking rivalry,
'Tis difficult to catch.

Sam. The whistling girl,
The gardener girl, the farmerette, the what
You will; she nursed in France or worked in some
Canteen, the soldiers' idol I've been told;
But here she sprays our cabbages or trains
Tomato plants. 'Tis only play to keep
Her hand in touch; her heart as well, she finds
The coloured help most int'resting, has taught
Some Northern ways and learnt some Southern tunes.
She's here to rest, a holiday, has earned
It faithfully.

[Enter Felicia, not noticing Bertram and whistling a plaintive negro air.]

Felicia. O Sam, I feel so troubled.

Sam. Surely not, then Eden's dark indeed
If it can dull your cheeriness. Once Eden
Was Eden-like, when first the Colonel married.
This place was bought to dower a sprightly bride;
Now shadows creep and creep, while all around
The sunshine wakes new treasures fairly begging
Some gay rejoinder.

Felicia. Yes, there's reason, Sam,
In what you say, this spot is beautiful
And yet its very beauty palls to-day—
A something that's unnatural, perfection
That's overplanned; to please the ear canaries
Must gap the time till mating wild-birds choose
To fling their harmonies. That holly bush
Reflects my mood, its Christmas berries fail
To flash their cheer through clinging Spanish moss.

That threads a shroudy course from branch to branch.

Sam. Miss Eve approves the matted stuff.

Bertram. 'Tis true
It has a silv'ry sheen as clouds that film
A coyish sun.

Felicia. [*Startled.*] A stranger speaks?

Sam. A poet,
A mountebank, a questioner, the Colonel's
Discovery! A present to Miss Eve,
Who quickly tires, and now I'm asked to show
The gate.

Felicia. [*Addressing Bertram.*] You're spent and travel-
stained, do you
Live far from here?

Sam. A circus man, a trickster
Whose key unlocks—

Felicia. [*Excitedly taking the key from Bertram.*] You've
found my key, O joy,
I've found myself again! Since I was ten
This key has never left my bosom. See
The cord is frayed and worn, it broke this morning.
The day has been unchristmas like. I lost
My bearings. [*Fastening the key.*] Now, I think, the cord
will hold,
I'll knot it firmly. O, I thank you so!

[*She shakes hands with Bertram, then looks at him anxiously.*]
You're feverish! Where's my thermometer?

[*She takes one from her chatelaine and places it in Bert-*

ram's mouth.]

Ah, here it is. No word, I pray! keep quiet.
I'll feel your pulse. [*After a pause.*] You'll help me, Sam,
please fetch
Some broth, just tell the cook 'tis I who ask;
Use tact.

Sam. And thus we show the gentleman
The gate! [*Exit with ladder and saw.*]

Felicia. Rest here till Sam returns, till you
Have gained some strength; I know a pleasant cottage
Whose widowed mistress has a sunny room
To spare, will lend her kindly service; there
We'll nurse you back to health—and happiness.
I feel so different, I've found my key!
Life's not a picture book, there's something real
To do. My friend, the Colonel's wife, has tried
To live a poem, wrapped herself with charms,
Forgetting poems, honest poems, spring
From suffering, from struggle—not standing still.

Bertram, And is there such a thing as standing still?

Felicia. Why, no, there's slipping—slipping toward
disaster?
Divorce may be! The Colonel seeks amusement,
Finds only posing dullness here.

Bertram. Amid
This loveliness!

Felicia. Ay, feast your eyes and weave
Your dreams, forget the poison-snake that lurks
Unseen. I'll moist'n this handkerchief, 'twill cool
Your brow. [*She dips her handkerchief in the pond and lays it
on his forehead, then, with a twig, pulls some moss
from the holly tree.*]

And tear away some clogging moss.
Behold! the holly berries gleam rich tales
Of fireside-Christmasses.

Bertram. I feel so tired,
Those tales are wrought of merry laughter, glee,
And boisterous frolicking, of noisy crackers,
Gay-coloured caps, a carnival of sight
And sound, have you a calmer tale to ease
An aching brain? Whence came that little key,
Thus cunningly devised?

Felicia. The story brings
To light my inward self, but what of that?
If it can medicine a sick man's mind,
Or give him pause for pleasant revery,
Or even steal a moment's pain.—Our summers
Were spent where the St. Lawrence widens gulfwards
Some twenty miles across, our house perched high
Upon a moss-grown, wooded cliff and there
Like Izaak once in bible-days, would I,
A little girl, fare forth at eventide,
To meditate. The parting sun strewn glory
On waters, on purple hills beyond, it tipped
The clouds with promise, jewelled cities peeped
And Love dismounted from a camel-train;
But ever was veiled the answer sought by me,
What single wish, if gained, would satisfy.
Each time a shooting star flashed wonderment,
Each time, o'er one's left shoulder, first was glimpsed
The ghostly moon's pale crescent-form, each time
A fowl's breast-bone was pulled in laughing contest,
One made a wish, how often gratified,
And yet no lasting good achieved; for when
A toy's bright novelty has dulled, a part
Of every day it seems. Possessions! pleasures!
I, a child, had learnt their fleeting worth.
What good though stretched beyond? One day, toward dusk

I picked my way along the bouldered beach,
Close by the ebbing tide, beneath my feet
The seaweed crunched, its briny odour filled
The air, I drew deep breaths and felt the joy
That comes from earth's delight, then suddenly
I slipped, my ankle torn with darts of pain
That forced rebellious tears; a little heap
Of huddled misery I lay and watched,
Half consciously, the mauvish counter-glow
That slowly spread discovering the night's
Approach. I turned to face the setting sun
Whose radiance aroused and startled me.
And lo! My answer came, 'twas happiness
Despite untoward circumstance and as
I raised myself I clutched this mystic key.

Bertram. Your pain had disappeared?

Felicia. Why, no, 'twas there
And walking caused much torture, yet I climbed
The rocky path that homewards led, nor felt
Distraught, nor feared the dark recesses strewed
With wayward pine, nor caught my breath when some
Great warty toad made sudden leap amid
The quiv'ring ferns.

Bertram. A sort of ecstasy,
It could not last beyond next morning's pinprick.

Felicia. Reactions come, of course, you saw to-day
A more uneven mood; but then I'd lost
My key. Did you remark that "human's" spelt
With "e," "humane," the ancient way; it shows
The key's antiquity and teaches much.
To conquer my own suffering I learnt
That summer night, as years rolled by I touched
A further truth, the world had need of me.
And what more lasting happiness—to find

One's niche, to serve!—But Sam has met with some
Rebuff. I'll smooth the matter, fetch your broth
Myself. [*Handing Bertram the key.*] Here, hold this key till
my return.
Twill comfort you. [Exit]

Bertram. O little key! what wreck
Has stranded you! What scenes of martyrdom,
Of sacrifice, of deeds heroic you
Have witnessed! Little key, what simple tales
Of kindnesses you whisper now. To find
One's niche, to serve—

ACT III.

Scene.—The same as Act I; the room is flooded with the sunshine of Christmas morning. There are more papers scattered on the table, and some have fallen on the floor. Bertram as last seen in Act I. A knocking arouses him. Nan's voice is heard from without.

Nan. 'Tis I! 'tis Nan! A merry, merry Christmas,
Please let me in.

Bertram. The door's unlatched.
[*Enter Nan, bearing a tray, some holly is pinned on her dress.*]

Nan. [Looking round before she sets the tray on the table.] O Poet,
Your bed is undisturbed! these littered papers
Disclose a peevish night; a sick man, too.
How wan and strange you look—and shivering;
Your nature must be cruel so to treat

Yourself and draw my tears on Christmas day;
 A day that ill becomes deserved reproof;
 I'll stay my lecturing. I've brought some tea
 And johnny-cake, a nice thick crusty corner,
 That's buttered with no sparing hand.

Bertram.

How kind

You are! I've lost my appetite. A sip
 Of tea perhaps! please hold the cup. I tremble,
 There, there, enough! If I could reach my bed.
 The room plays tricks. O Nan, 'tis pitiful
 This weakness!

[Bertram reaches his bed with difficulty, leaning on Nan, who makes him comfortable, and then persuades him to take some food.]

Nan.

Lean on me, more heavily.

Now let me plump your pillows, so, that's better.
 Another drop of tea, this tempting crumb.
 Well done! Another, still one mouthful more.

Bertram. I thank you, Nan, dear Nan.

Nan. *[Sitting on the trunk beside the bed.]* You're strong
 enough

To hear some news? Some most exciting news!
 A paper came to Mrs. Brent, who lives
 Next door. 'Twas wrapped around some groceries.
 She smoothed it out to line her kitchen-shelf,
 And saw your name in print, and much besides.
 In cotton dress, with starting eyes, and curlers
 That peeped beneath a careless shawl; forgetting
 Her stylish coat and dignity she dared
 The frost, 'tis nipping cold outside, and spurned
 The carping neighbours. Uncle read the page
 Aloud, turned green with envy, each then read
 In turn. The tenement is proud of you!

Bertram. It jeers at me. You've failed to understand,
Reminding me of that unkind review.

Nan. Unkind or not, it talks of you. When Uncle
Was jailed for vagrancy, he made some joke,
'Twas printed to his great delight. He has
The cutting still; but your long notice, filled
With longer words, 'tis wonderful! They want
You down to-night to celebrate.

Bertram. 'Tis kind
Of them, much more than I deserve—to-night,
Say "yes, we'll celebrate!"—to-night! perhaps,
We'll celebrate. They truly care for me?

Nan. Of course they do and I—

Bertram. You like me, Nan,
Then fetch that photograph, a hangman's job
That shall not soil your trusty hands. I've strength
Enough to rend what once I idolized,
So falls a false divinity! Now bury
The corpse, nor shed a tear; the room seems freer.
I breathe again.

Nan. [*Throwing the pieces in a basket.*] Poor Beauty!
Such an end,
'Mid scraps of broken poems, rest in peace!

Bertram. Nan! come here and answer truthfully;
You're still too young to blush when asked your age.

Nan. Last birthday fifteen coloured candles flickered
Above a frosted cake!—extravagance
My mother said, it gave me pleasure though.
However poor one likes to feel of some
Importance, once a year, at least.

Bertram. I find
You most important, Nan.

Nan. You find me useful,
That's different.

Bertram. I'm not so sure, a wife
Is most important! Nan, some day you'll be
My wife?

Nan. Your little wife! I've dreamt of that;
But never truly thought you cared. O Poet!
I somehow feel—I don't know how I feel—
'Tis like a hundred birthdays rolled in one
And myriads of shining candles!

Bertram. [*Laying his hand on Nan's.*] Listen!
Two years from now I'll come to fetch—my bride,
A proud young thing of seventeen.

Nan. You're going
Away? Two years from now! two centuries!
You've blown my candles out.

Bertram. Poor quiv'ring flames,
Succumbing thus! A fairer light we'll beg,
The torch of constancy, whose steady glow
Should bring such pleasant things to sight and sound
That twenty-four short months will swiftly go.

Nan. What things?

Bertram. Why, first a curly head that's bent
Near mine, a kneeling form that slightly sways
And touches me, a heart that beats as mine;
"At last! at last!" a mind which strives with mine
To follow solemn words that bind two souls
Already bound. The sunlight filters through

Stained glass, church-music sounds—

Nan. [*After a pause.*]

And then?

Bertram.

And then?

The tencement will throb with welcomings
For each must kiss the gentle bride while he,
Who claims such property, stands idly by
Until o'er zealous friends demand the speech
That spoils his appetite for crackling pork
And bottled ginger-beer.

Nan.

And then?

Bertram.

And then

An arm is slipping round a yielding form,
A little head falls wearily, a faint
But happy sigh is scarcely heard above
The rumbling train; whose passengers, enjoying
This young romance, politely watch the landscape
When grains of rice are scattered from a new
White-feathered hat.

Nan.

Dark grey or taupe would be
More practical; but white is prettier.
And then?

Bertram. And then a wondrous drive!—a road
Snake-fenced 'mid fields of moonlit snow that glitters
The wide expanse and friendliness of life
Unsmirched by sullen city slums.

Nan. [*Softly, after a pause.*]

And then?

Bertram. And then trim rows of poplar trees that hedge
Beside a rough stone wall, a sudden swerve,
The orchard's passed, the cottage lamps outvie
The moon, 'tis home at last!—O Nan, you'll help

To soften a father's heart that's steeled against
His wayward son, you'll teach my mother how
To laugh again!

Nan. [*Slowly.*] If only, if only all
Come true—

Bertram. We'll make our happiness and that
Reminds of strange events from waking haze
Now marshalling. No train of images,
Confused and blurred; but sober happenings
They seem, distinct and real. Through the night
I travelled far and made discovery,
A niche awaits each human being. Mine,
Discarded once, unrecognized, has grown
A very haven—there to tend the fruits
Of earth, direct one's thoughts toward wide horizons—
Tell them, Nan, I talked of home.

Nan. Of course
We'll tell them everything; but you intend
To see them first and then return—two years
From now.

Bertram. Two years from now, amen! I feel
So oddly tired, a curious detachment!
Please reach that scribbling book. [*Nan fetches the book.*] The
pencil lies
Inside. I must have sharpened it. Run off,
Dear Nan, the words come tumbling fast and faster.

[*Exit Nan, waving a kiss to Bertram. He writes feverishly, then stops, then writes again, repeating too low to be heard. He sinks back, starts up, writes a few more words, drops back wearily, slightly stretches, then seemingly falls into an easy sleep.*

After a lengthy pause, footsteps and voices are heard without.]

Nan. This way, please mind your steps, that twisted slab
Should be renewed. Beware the banister,
Some rungs have broken loose, [*Knocking.*] Two visitors!

[*Enter Nan, her finger on her lips, followed by Louise and Frank.*]

He's fast asleep. 'Tis pity to disturb him!
And yet some visitors! Perhaps you'll wait,
Last night his bed remained untouched. I think
He wrote, he talked of distant travels.

Frank. [*Taking the chair by the table and motioning the other to Louise.*] Travels?

Nan. Pretended travels, poets need nor boats,
Nor motor cars. [*Glancing at the papers on the table and
Picking some from the floor.*] Just as I said, these
sheets
Are freshly written; stacks and stacks! That's why
He sleeps so restfully; his thought has culled
A flower that pleases him.

Frank. Did he appear
Distressed?

Nan. Though tired he talked of happiness.

Frank. One never truly understands these poets;
They seem so sensitive to harshness, yet
Rebound so readily, I feared that foolish
Review might give offence, so came this morning
To soothe, to bring apologies, if such
Were needed. A new man undertook the task,
Being young he found it easier to show
His cleverness by trapping faults than letting
Fresh beauties, immature, but beauties still,
Awake an answering glow. Receptive minds
Are few; how very few once recognized

Sublimity! a thought for Christmas day!
Small wonder sparks from minor poets fail
To kindle! You, Louise, had read the poems
Yet based your estimate on one review—

Louise. I lightly skimmed to find their drift before
Acknowledging and then forgot; so many
Engagements crowd at Christmas time, besides
'Twas only yesterday I learnt from you
Their worth and then that matinee postponed
Our call. [*Looking around.*] This room is comfortless and
cold.
I scarcely thought, in Montreal, to see
Such poverty, unless from shiftlessness.

Nan. You show much ignorance, although you go
To matinees.

Louise. And you, not much politeness!

Nan. Most likely not; my purse is far too slim
To purchase such commodity.

Frank. You've got
Some wit.

Nan. One picks that up in gutters, yes,
I've some accomplishments. My name is Nancy.
You need not introduce this lady. I've
Admired her photograph.

Louise. But where?

Nan. It stood
Upon that bracket, idolized these last
Ten months.

Louise. And now?

Nan. [*Pointing to the scraps in the paper-basket.*] And
now, poor thing! 'tis dead!
Alack such beauty!

Louise [*Rising.*] Dead! Come Frank, I'm tired
Of waiting. [*She walks towards the door.*]

Nan. Tired of waiting! he was tired,
Poor Poet, tired of waiting!
[*The scribbling book unfurls and slides off the bed.*]

Frank. [*Addressing Louise.*] Stay a second!
He stirs.

Nan. [*Going to the bed.*] Yes,—no, he's sound asleep,
its only
The scribbling book that must have slipped itself
And toppled down. This page turned under bears
A little poem, written as I left
The room, 'twas just before you came, he would
Not mind my reading it aloud. His prose
Is private property, I never glance
At it; his verse belongs to others if—
And that's the trouble—if they only pushed
Their claim. [*Looking over the poem.*] Now listen, please,
keep very quiet.
The words are soft and delicate, the kind
He sometimes strings with sobs.

Vistas of sweetness have opened before me,
Turnings and lanes of infinite worth;
Visions, companionship, born of Love's fervour,
Peace that is calmness, tempered with mirth.
Driving ambition has ceased to disturb me;
One will direct, uncover the way.—
Tired as an infant that restfully snuggles,
Sinking to slumber, wearied from play.
If my awaking be far from Earth's morrow,
One will assuage the tears that may fall;

Knowing 'twas purposed, divine instigation,
 She, who is left, will fathom God's call.

"Will fathom God's call," what does he mean?

"She, who is left, will fathom God's call"—

A few more lines; but feebly written, scarce

Discernable. "I leave my everything"—

That sounds like prose, unmeant for further quest.

"She who is left will fathom"—Meaningless!

I dare not probe, some mystery undreamt! [*She bends over Bertram.*]

O come, make haste! please, please! his hands are chilled,

There's not the slightest movement, not a breath!

He must have fainted, fallen in some trance.

Frank. [*Hastily approaches the bed and examines Bertram.*] What's this? he's dead, O dreadful thought!

Nan. [*Kneeling beside the bed.*] No, no,
 A trance! 'tis nothing else. Read this, it might
 Explain. [*She pushes the scribbling book to Frank.*]

Frank. [*Reading.*] I leave my everything to Nancy
 Street,

My promised wife, signed, Christmas, 1920,
 Bertram Brixton.

He must have known, have had some inkling.

Nan. Known?
 That but acknowledges his love for me,
 His promised—quickly fetch a Doctor, some one!

Frank. We've come too late, Louise, but yesterday
 We might have helped, would time turned back, and this
 Averted!

Louise. [*Covering her face with her hands.*] Horrible!

Frank. Ay, butterflies
 Are not immune from drenching skies; [*laying his hand on Nan's head.*] But this

Afflicted girl, I grieve for her, I mourn
Unwritten poems, unfulfilled romance.

Nan. "Will fathom God's call!"
So help me, Poet! teach me, teach me!—Watch
His smile, [*in a low tone*] he surely lives!

[*Frank sadly shakes his head, then walks to the table and lifts some papers.*]

Frank [*meditatively.*] I wonder—

THE GARDENER SAINT

THE GARDENER SAINT.

Sinope boasts the cynic-sage, Diogenes,
Who prided in his beggar-garb, his vagrancies;
Great Mithradates, conqueror and king, who
sought

Earth's dominance, for lust of gain vast armies
fought:

Sinope boasts a simple market-gardener,
Whose name was Phocas, humble Christian
worshipper.

No superman—but fragrant as the soil he
tilled,

His fame has blown across the centuries, has
filled

The souls of struggling men with thoughts of
peace and cheer—

His goal may well be reached within one's
'lotted sphere.

Hard by Sinope, ancient seaport town, there
stood

A pleasant cottage, known throughout that
neighbourhood.

THE GARDENER SAINT

Its garden stretched beside the bustling high-
way; few

Who passed in gilded carriages, but stopped
to view

The rare exotic bloom that rioted, restrained
Alone where laden vines in graceful curves
were trained,

Where orchard trees drooped low with juicy
plums and pears,

Where useful vegetables patterned out trim
squares

Of tender green. The owner readily would
tell

Whence came this gorgeous flower or that, and
sometimes dwell

On tales of distant shores, fog-bound Brit-
annia

Whose mines were worked by savages;
Numidia

Where horsemen rode unbridled steeds, till
"that's enough!"

A chattering parrot cried. Amused with this
rebuff

The stranger went his way, while Phocas,
smiling, fed

The bird, then sought his tools beneath the
trellised shed.

THE GARDENER SAINT

Quite other words the cunning bird employed
when stayed
A foot-sore trav'ller, coveting the palm-tree's
shade.
"The gate's unlatched, come in! come in!" and
O, if paused
A sailor, what strange greetings volleyed
forth, sounds caused
By rusty oar-locks, flapping sails, a captain's
gruff
Command, and then in dulcet tones, "there's
food enough
And some to spare." Old Phocas loved the
sailors; they
Loved him! Rich curios were proffered to
repay
His cordial hospitality; but only seeds,
Young shoots and bulbs the gardener wished;
how many weeds
From foreign lands were fostered in some
galley-hole,
Received at last with grace, though oft but
meagre dole.
Yet here and there a treasure came that
Phocas took
With trembling hands, examining as some
rare book
That happily illumines strange new lines of

THE GARDENER SAINT

thought.

By clever questioning of place and soil he
caught

The plant's environment and seldom failed
to raise

Another garden denizen to sing God's praise.

"This Phocas is a Christian!" 'twas with pity
said,

A soul creating so much beauty, yet misled,
Adopting this fanatic creed that thus disturbed
Authority, with torture even scarcely curbed,
A man so good, despising gods upheld by time
And State! Indulgently some said: "No
heinous crime,

What matters false belief! he'd never stoop
to plot

Who delves with horny hands, contented with
his lot!"

And Phocas was content though often problems loomed;

Some widow sorrowing for flesh and bone
entombed,

Forgetting souls in Paradise; a wayward
boy,

Who sought to pry the haunts of sin; how find
employ

THE GARDENER SAINT

For these young orphan girls; some neighbours quarrelling
The gardener dug or pruned, solution seemed to spring
From soft, moist earth or tree relieved of sapless wood—
Poor friends he helped, though working for his livelihood.

One sultry day toward eventide, two lictors, tired
From dust the passing chariots up-whirled, inquired
If they might rest, refresh themselves, or even spend
The night in this idyllic spot, their journey end
Sinope; but their business might well await
Next morning—not too pressing these affairs of State.
'The gardener welcomed them most kindly, found them seats
Beneath a mulberry's grateful shade, where simple meats,
With fresh goat-milk, were neatly served.
The parrot though
Refrained from speech; but stayed his preening, muttered low—

THE GARDENER SAINT

Some peach-stones, offered by the strangers,
tossed aside.

"Ill-mannered bird," they said, with flutters
it replied,

Then, listless, drooped its wings; nor cheered
when Phocas smoothed

The ruffled plumage, whispering soft words
that soothed.

The lictors ate with relish, listened to their
host,

Enjoyed his tales, adventures of their own
made boast.

Their tongues thus loosened, soon they told
their mission, how

One Phocas named, had been proscribed, to
disavow

His guilt was futile; trial, strict formality
Had been discarded. Diocletian's clemency
Had so increased this hateful Christian sect
that men

Now openly confessed their monstrous faith
with pen

And tongue, condemned the theatres, the
public games,

Foretold some strange new kingdom, first a
world in flames,

Galerius was right to warn the Emperor,

THE GARDENER SAINT

No Christian, but at heart, a sworn conspirator!

Their kindly friend must keep this secret safe,
they felt

He might be trusted, even know where
Phocas dwelt,

Who scarcely dreamt this night his last on
earth. Unmoved

The gardener listened, slowly turned aside,
reproved

The parrot's cries, then said: "I know this
Phocas well,

He is not far away, tomorrow I will tell

Where best to find him, now you need some
rest, 'tis late!"

The cottage shone with cleanliness. How
fortunate

To find such lodgings, thought the lictors,
then they slept,

While Phocas paced the garden footpaths—
prayed and wept.

A ribald song disturbed the night, a drunken
brawl,

The parrot stirred, some moths came brushing
by, a ball

Once lost, ere he had scarce turned six, rolled

THE GARDENER SAINT

back again,
Bright coloured like the flowers he loved so
well, his brain
Whirled strange, half-frenzied thoughts.
Though oft called old, not much
Beyond his prime he felt, his muscles firm, nor
touch
Of pain. Long years should stretch before
him still, to plant
Those seeds of faith that throve within the
miscreant
And choked the weeds of sin: who now would
help the maimed
And poor? his children all, the many proud
who shamed
To ask of others? who would tend his gardens,
cheer
His sailor friends? God surely meant his
duty here.

For this the lictors had revealed their plans,
no chance
Directed them, 'twas heaven-sent deliverance!
How many Christians, Bishops even, prudently
Sought hidden refuge till the storm of tyranny
Had passed—beyond his gate the road to
freedom lay.

THE GARDENER SAINT

Ah, then he paused, the lictors, what of them?
their prey
Escaped meant punishment, his life might
forfeit theirs!
Then those who sheltered him—what lies!
what secret fears!
God could not wish such things, 'twas in a
garden too
The Prince of Peace had been betrayed; with-
out ado
He faced the crowd, nor let his followers re-
sist.
So Phocas turned, and lo! a light had pierced
the mist
That fogged his soul. He grasped a spade
and broke the sods,
His answer softly came, why this warm earth
was God's;
The flowers, the stars were His, and all obeyed
His will,
He, too, would question not, work lay before
him still.
In peaceful mood he dug, how small his
troubles seemed:
What pleasures he had known!—what higher
wonders gleamed!

THE GARDENER SAINT

When dawn unfurled her roseate streamers,
wakening
The world to song, there swayed the parrot
on its swing,
A bustling soon of bees and butterflies, gay
tints
Assumed their day-light form, bright-glanc-
ing, petaled-hints
Of paradise—old Phocas stood with arms out-
stretched
Beside his fresh-dug grave, his harbour well
nigh fetched.
He faced the rising sun and hymned a matin-
psalm,
Low-swelling notes of praise, like ocean-
depth his calm.

My soul's a harp whereon the Lord doth play,
Stringing lauds of melody;
My soul's a flute, whose sweet-toned breaths
convey
The Holy Spirit's purity;
My soul's a temple, where the Word holds
sway,
Salvation's Song of Ecstasy!

The cottage door was opened, there the lictors
stood;
The gardener tightly clutched a cross of

THE GARDENER SAINT

twisted wood.

He greeted them with smiles, "this Phocas
found at last!

Prepared for the Feast of Death, its vigil
past."

His guests, bewildered, asked where Phocas
was. "Not far

From you. Arrest him now! his judgment-
seat's the bar

Of God. I am, in truth, the man you seek."
A chill,

Like fear, now smote these hardened officers.
Fulfill

The Emperor's command, imbrue their hands
in blood

Of one who showed such lofty virtue! one
whose flood

Of charity had welled for them! Impossible!
A crime that Nemesis would scarcely brook,
'twas ill

Such deeds! The primus lictor closed his eyes
and spoke:

"I see no Phocas here. Now swiftly fly, invoke
The Roman gods or him, the Sophist cruci-
fied,

I care not whom, but search for trusty friends
and hide.

THE GARDENER SAINT

“Your eyes are closed to Truth,” the gardener
said, “what harm
Obedience to law—a higher law may charm
Those eyes awake. Till then you are but as
that axe,
An instrument, must be God-chosen, that
blindly hacks,
Yet so performs His will.” Thus saying
Phocas bared
His neck, beside the open grave he knelt, pre-
pared!

Yes, Phocas died, his spirit, though, lived on;
the poor,
The sick remembered—in his name how many
more
Were reached than he had succoured from his
garden home!
If stranger hands now pruned his arbours,
dug his loam,
Small matter, while his teachings lived in
humble hearts.
The seeds of faith he sowed were borne to
foreign parts
By sailor friends, with tears oft watered, till
there bloomed
Fair flowers of kindness, brightening where
distress had gloomed.

THE GARDENER SAINT

Yes, Phocas lived, through martyrdom a treasured Saint!

More close he seemed than when flesh-garbed.

A custom, quaint

And beautiful, arose on Euxine ships, each meal

Was Phocas bidden, rationed like the rest, to feel

His presence meant that sweet and godly themes replaced

Obscene and lurid talk. The food went not to waste,

By lot 'twas portioned, paid with coin, "Phocas share,"

That grew each voyage, some poor famished soul its heir.

St. Phocas soothed the waves, 'twas freely said, and how

A phantom figure, dimly seen above the prow, Had warned of sunken wrecks, more oft than once a hand

Had waked a sleeping steersman, twice a countermand

Had saved a ship, another not the captain spoke;

When praise of Phocas rose and fell with measured stroke

THE GARDENER-SAINTE

Of oars, the hymn-chant eased the heavy
muscle play—
The erstwhile gardener still the sailors' prop
and stay!

Sinope honoured him, a stately church was
built,
Adorned with works of art, and filled with
gauds of gilt
That pilgrims brought, return for benefits
bestowed,
For ailments cured; from out this shrine such
virtue flowed,
A fane that begged his relics, raised in Rome
itself!
There Emperors and Kings implored relief
from pelf
And rank, as lesser folk from poverty and
wrong.
Who humbly sought the gardener Saint amid
the throng
Of eager supplicants, one special lesson
gained—
To work, with kindly thoughts,—God's will
thereby attained!

A WARNING

* A WARNING.

"Heed now your steps, who wander here,
Lest loving friends should grieve your
loss."

The monument was well preserved,
Yet there a crack was greened with moss.

"Madame de Broc"—I further read,
Then paused, an old man beckoned me.
"You wish the tale," he said, "sit here,
What finer seat than fallen tree!

"A Queen once spoke those very words,
Ah! she was tired of marble thrones!
But here, relieved from state, she laughed
Where waters caught her silver tones.

* Within the beautiful Gorge de Gresy in Savoy, a simple monument bears the following inscription:

Mme. la baronne de Broc, âgée de vingt-cinq ans, a péri sous les yeux de son amie, le 10 Juin 1813. O vous qui visitez ces lieux, n'avancez qu'avec précaution sur ces abîmes: songez à ceux qui vous aiment.

A WARNING

"To mingle them, alas! with grief.
Hark! through the gorge they echo still."
I only caught the splashing falls,
Their noise faint-pierced by insects' trill.

A lovely spot, our resting place!
'Mid rocks and ferns the rapids sprayed,
A peep of sky, through wooded slopes
But emphasized the cooling shade.

A mill-wheel throbbed a tale of life,
Close by the stone that told of death.
"Life and death," in soft patois
The peasant drawled, then blew a breath.

"'Twas Queen Hortense who raised that
stone—
Madame de Broc, her life-long friend,
A snatch of Heaven's grateful bloom,
My Father often would contend.

"In yonder mill he worked as I,
Though then he was but errand boy,
A youth of twelve or fourteen years
Who gladly boasted his employ.

"Unlike the lads to-day. The word
Was passed, the Queen! the Queen! most
low

A WARNING

The miller's bow. My Father peeped;
No haughty dame, one laughing so.

"Her people seemed more stiff and proud;
But not that sweet Madame de Broc,
Who met a small boy's eyes and smiled,
A girlish form in muslin frock.

"Like mountain-cyclamen her charm,
Content to dwell in solitude,
A flower well met in this wild gorge
With reverence and faith imbued.

"Her mistress, more a garden-rose
That thrives when tended artfully,
Its many petals, many moods,
Uncurled to catch the courtier's eye.

"Each heart was filled with June that day,
Though here descending, jokes were
stayed,
For beauty brooks no idle talk,
'Tis like, at mass, the host displayed.

"Deep breaths of joy! then wished the Queen
To shadow on her sketching block
The foam, shot through with shimmering
light,

A WARNING

— Best seen, she thought, from mid-stream
rock.

“My Father fetched the bridging-board;
Light-footed passed her Majesty,
Madame de Broc assayed to cross,
Then swayed back, gazing fearfully.

“’Tis well the Marchal Ney, le Brave
Des Braves, sees not his sister paled
With cowardice.” So laughed the Queen,
And as she laughed her lady quailed

“Then stepped unsteadily. Mon Dieu,
That such things be! an ankle turned?
A vertigo? Who knows? A splash,
Engulfing waters foamed and churned;

“No cry for help where torrents swirled,
Nor drapery; all depth and froth.
Quick-knelt the anguished, sobbing Queen,
Her shawl was thrown as salvage cloth;

“No hand was stretched to clutch its fold,
‘O save her, save her lest she drown:’
Shrill shrieks my father ne’er forgot,
No trace of lovely face nor gown.

A WARNING

“The mill-hands searched with feverish haste,
With poles they worked the seething race,
Some firmly planked that nought could pass,
With help near by, such narrow space!

“Impossible to perish thus!
Yet moments dragged while frantically
The stream was whipped; exhausted sank
The Queen,—all feared what they might
see.

“Though hope revived from time to time.
Redoubled efforts, still no clue;
Was death thus brutal, surely not,
Nor warning thought, nor last adieu!

“An hour had passed in fruitless search,
While moaned the horror-stricken Queen;
Then prayed and sobbed her friend would
soon
Be found, that God must intervene.

“Yet gushed the waters noisily,
My father thought they laughed at man
Who wished to chain their power;—to steal
Such prey, a long concerted plan!

"Another anxious hour, the race
Was emptied now, the wheel was still,
Who brightly joyed but short time since
Asleep beyond all earthly skill.

"A shelving rock had caught her robe,
A storm-guard 'gainst the smoking tide,
Untouched her form and fragile face,
Her lips sweet-pursed, 'twas thus she
died."

The old man paused and dropped a tear,
"My Father's tale, but now 'tis mine."
"The Queen?" I prompted. "Ah, Hortense!
'Such things must be our Lord's design,'

"Assured the gentle nuns who watched
The body, comforting the Queen,
Till she was led through pious talk
To regions happily serene.

"Light pleasantries but stab fresh wounds,
Where solemn thought brings helpful ease;
Reminded thus of life's short span,
Devotion, gracious works appease.

"Dispensing charity, the Queen
Grew soft and sweet as her lost friend,

A WARNING

Whose spirit seemed to linger near
While deeds like this she might commend.

“Hers too the luxury of gift!
Hortense declared. Some money still
Wrapped in that gown, all water soaked,
Was used as seemed most suitable

“To buy for some poor village girls
The bride-like first-communion dress;
So garbed their shyly courtseyed thanks
Suffused the heart with tenderness.

“If joy can pierce the veil of grief
It surely comes through acts like this,
In planning others’ happiness
The giver too must feel some bliss.

“The Emperor’s birthday soon approached;
How celebrate? Festivity
Seemed idle now; yet unobserved,
T’would be a gross discourtesy!

“The poor should be her guests, the Queen
Decided. Tables spread to suit
The day, a royal feast prepared,
Fresh meats! rich pastry! such rare fruit!

A WARNING

“Remembered long in grateful hearts!
As souvenir the pretty plate,
With furnishings, scarce needed, though
Oft shown to friends less fortunate.

“Such simple kindness touches more
Than monument or hospital!
Howe’er the nursing Sisters gained
Their dream; the Queen was liberal.

“Then yonder stone was raised to warn
How grief may follow recklessness.
(Though here ’twas but a chance mis-step)
So think of others—their distress!”

FLORIDA POEMS

PEACE.

"Peace! Peace!" long needled pines are whispering,

A Sabbath Peace beside the river's brink,
Where tropic shrubs ope glories, mauvish-pink;

Rare incense yellow-puffed mimosas swing;
Those solemn eucalyptus, green-grey, string
A pillared course, cathedral aisles they link,
Whose vaulted azure steeps the things we think

In harmonies that choiring angels sing.

Peace! Peace! that's colourful and pure and true,

That's fragrant, tuneful, born of holiness,
The thought of thee has gleamed in visionings,

In prophets' dreams—thy beauty culled by few—

The nations waken to thy loveliness,
Within their reach to serve the King of kings.

Fort Myers, Florida,
January 16th, 1920.

CONTENT.

"You! a poet, find no words to sing
 This garden's loveliness? No golden chain
 To bind its fragrance for another's gain?
 No imagery attuned to coloring?——
 Such regal, scarlet, purple blossoming
 'Mid lustrous leaves! Those royal palms
 maintain
 The pomp of ancient courts—and you re-
 main
 Thus silent, where inspiring visions spring."

"Words! words! they're formed for longings.
 How express
 One's deep content? Soft swishing sounds
 that come
 With stillness, zephyrs rustling fruited
 boughs,
 A mocking-bird's sweet caroling confess
 This garden's beauty. Hark! that insect's
 hum
 Breathes more content than gentlest word
 allows."

UNREST.

The hedged hibiscus swings its scarlet bells,
The bamboos creak, the palm leaves crunch
and grind,
The airy bougainvillea, entwined
With flaming trumpet-blossoms, sways and
swells
Its shelt'ring grace, to spill 'mid grass-grown
shells,
Mauve-tissued daintiness. The moaning
wind
Sweeps golden freight, where grape-fruit
trees are lined,
And from the mango-flower wafts luscious
smells.

Beneath the oleander's shade we dream,
The wind disturbs, old memories arise,
The buffetings of youth in northern climes,
The sting of frost, the zest, the joy supreme
Of healthy work aglow with enterprise,
The wind dies down. We drowse—and
dream sometimes.

EFFORT.

My inner self doth watch with anxious care
A flutt'ring bird that flies uncertainly,
Enmeshed it falls, disconsolate,—but see,
Again it rises, seeks with beak to tear
The fowler's net; ah, now its glazed eyes stare
A faintness past astonishment—nay, see;
One final effort rends the net, and free
The birdling soars, high! high! through realms
of air!

My will's the bird, myself doth watch with
fear;
This torpid clime, the fowler's sorry net
That muzzles thought, and stays the
happy word,
Till life, through vague imagining, grows
drear;
Asudden my will bursts through the mental
fret;
Released, it scours as any winging bird!

HEARTS-EASE.

Each sense is satisfied, yet stirs the soul
 With longings vague, a will for sustenance
 Beyond this garden's charm—to wake from
 trance,
From lethargy, from beauty's sweet control;
To face a world of ugliness and dole,
 To feel the tentacles of grim mischance,
 To taste what's bitter, hear sharp disson-
 ance,
To smell foul weeds—and all to reach what
 goal?

Above discomfort spreads a lofty palm,
 Each branch the prize of inward victory.
 There grows the bay, each glossy leaf
 unfurled,
Rewarding effort—oft-time failure's balm—
 And there, hearts-ease, by sacrifice set free,
 Bears lasting flowers, with heaven's dew
 bepearled.

REGRET.

Where Summer smiles for twelve long
months, I tire

And long for Winter's frown, his stern
white face,

His rugged strength, the chill of his em-
brace,

His breath might fan to flame a living fire
From deadened embers of once strong desire,

His boist'rous tones might wake from sleep
and brace

Endeavour, lulled by languid Summer's
grace,

Until achievement leads to something higher.

But when I venture North, I think alone

Of Summer's charm, the smile I once de-
spised.

Her flowery garments seem more beau-
tiful,

Her fragrant drapery has sweeter grown,

Her vision—would it were immortalized!

I think of Summer, and am sorrowful.

MEMORIES.

I turn aside to catch sweet jangling bells,
Above the crunch of snow,
What tales their merry music tells
Of Christmas long ago.

Of careless laughter, shrill expectant cries;
The frosty stars less bright
Than happy, sparkling children's eyes
Amid a world pure white.

We're nestling neath great robes of fur and
see
That rounded yellow moon,
That's stolen from its moorings free—
A shining, gold balloon!

Now jolts the sleigh, our great-aunt's door
invites,
The fir-tree's pungent smell
Suggests new secrets, new delights,
There's mistletoe as well!

Each rosy cheek is kissed, a toll to pay;
Then bursts the tree in view,
An angel glitters, holding sway
O'er fruit of radiant hue.

MEMORIES

Such loveliness now quells the voice of joy,
In wonderment we gaze,
At sugared beast, gilt nut and toy
'Mid candles twinkling blaze.

A Pause—then hand grasps hand and round
we dance,
Our tune, a Christmas glee.
O giddy whirl!—O time's romance!
There shines another tree.

A spread live oak, electric wired, agleam
With bulbs of coloured glass,
By stiff palmettos casts a beam,
To cheer who gravely pass.

Jacksonville, Florida,
Xmas, 1919.

A PALM BEACH SOLON.

"Laziness will kill you!" pipes the meadow-lark;

"But 'kill' must be well emphasized and
'laziness'

Well drawled if one desires to imitate the
lark."

So says the coloured boy. We smile and
acquiesce.

Along the winding jungle trail he wheels our
chair,

Where gleams the morning-glory 'mid
glossed foliage,

Weird roots and vines. "The gumbo limbo,
pink and bare,

Was once, an evil spirit," informs our
friendly sage.

No beauty 'scapes his watchful eye, nor flower,
nor bird—

An orchid's crimson spike, a scarlet tan-
ager.

And much he tells of woodland lore, each
simple word

That's chosen, showing nature's true inter-
preter.

A PALM BEACH SALON

These sombrous forests, pleasing now while
snow lies deep

In northern climes, burst forth in rain-
bowed loveliness

When May trips daintily abroad, refreshed
by sleep.

The chiding meadow-lark has flown, soft
winds caress.

The bee dips down in nectar wells, extracts
the honey,

Releasnig scent; for every flower that
gayly blows

Expands its joy when swamps reflect skies
pure and sunny;

The passing bird drops garden seed—here
wild it grows.

So many sojourners! And yet how few re-
main

To welcome May's profusion. Paler tints
reveal

Her gifts where frost has chilled and snow has
coldly lain,

Her gaudy bawbles, bay and draped live-
oak conceal.

But May still slumbers; weaving jewelled

A PALM BEACH SALON

hopes, she dreams,
While sullen storms are brooding near, for
see Lake Worth;
Her waters sheen like opaled glass, this calm
that seems
Portends fierce winds and whirling clouds,
a rain-slashed earth!

We reached the sheltered porch ere fall big
spatt'ring drops,
Then, through a drenching downpour,
watch our friend depart,
A black American he called himself—he stops
To wave adieu — O coloured boy, with
poet's heart,

I envy not the pampered millionaire, but you
Who whistle 'neath the storm. Some silver
coins as tip!
How worthless! Golden thoughts, what
richer revenue?
I treasure those I've gained through kindly
fellowship.

HER FACE.

You say you do not love me; Sweet, then
why

Those tell-tale blushes? Why the quiv'ring
smile

That hovers, disappears, then plays awhile?
The roguish head, low-drooped, and down-
cast eye

Help steal what's venom from your harsh
reply.

Your iterated 'no' 's a depth of guile,
With tender years most hard to reconcile.
You turn, and like a half-tamed bird you fly!

Ah, now I've caught you in this warm
embrace!

See how I fondly crush all naughtiness;
Your lips you dare not purse to form
that 'no'.

A whispered 'yes,' the coin which lets
you go.

You liked me from the first you now con-
fess.

Ah Love! 'twas large writ on your truthful
face!

THE SETTLERS.

They stand beside that cyprus swamp,
 (On paper plans it seemed so fair),
A mirky ditch where barren trees,
 Enswathed with moss, weep grim despair.

No breath of wind disturbs the gloom,
 Dull, sluggish, banking clouds hang low,
Their shadows darken mud-stained pools
 Where sodden, tangled thickets grow.

Ill-omened spot, what terrors lurk
 When slime gives birth to ghostly trees?
That underbrush suggests the haunt
 Of snakes—or stranger mysteries.

Forebodings rise, miasma-like;
 The young bride clasps her husband's arm,
The silence weighs—a sudden splash,
 She pales and shudders with alarm.

He reassures, "a turtle plunged,
 How awkwardly it clammers back."
"But there—those gleaming eyes beneath,
 A stump alive, it may attack."

"An alligator, see! it glides
 Away." He laughs and points above

Where bunch great sprigs of mistletoe.

“That means good luck! A kiss! dear
Love!”

A buzzard, floating motionless,

Sees two young, happy things embrace,
And hears them talk of land reclaimed,
Of fruitful earth and flowering grace.

**THE SEMINOLE'S LAMENT.*

Like Joseph, garbed in divers hues,
A turbaned chieftain stood,
Erect within his light canoe,
Dug out of cyprus wood.

Upon his long push-pole he leaned
And watched the White Man's dredge
That clanked dread tales of land redeemed,
Of farms replacing sedge.

He watched coarse smoke that drifted far
Across the Everglades,
Fit emblem of the White Man's power
That stains where it invades.

The Seminole was stirred to wrath,
Was not this swamp his own?
Last stronghold of a dwindling tribe,
Where all its hopes are sown.

Where palms remind of ancient chiefs,
Beplumed for fierce affray,
Whose dauntless spirits walk once more,
When wand'ring moonbeams stray,

* The Author acknowledges indebtedness to Mrs. Minnie Moore Wilson's inspiring book, "The Seminoles of Florida." She also had the good fortune to meet some Members of the Tribe.

THE SEMINOLE'S LAMENT

Where sunny skies draw forth fair crops
From fertile hammock-soil,
Those precious isles 'mid billowed grass
Will stranger hands despoil?

A vision flashed from his dear youth,
A rookery destroyed,
'Mid scrub-palmettos dead birds strewn
That once had flown and joyed.

Proud egret tufts for White Man's squaw
Had lured the pillager;
The snowy heron's silken veil—
The cause of massacre!

Again he heard the fledglings' wail
That pierced his kindly heart,
At dawn he climbed great rubber trees
And took the parents' part;

With minnows were those orphans fed,
Then watered tenderly:
The nurslings thrive—Alas! some day
His own may starving be!

So happy now!—his children romp,
While glows the bright wheel-fire

THE SEMINOLE'S LAMENT

Beneath the steaming sofka-pot,
What more can flesh desire?

Wild turkey stew and venison,
Fresh fish from crystal springs—
But hark! the clanking dredge foretells
What dearth the morrow brings.

Canals will drain the Everglades,
Well-ordered farms replace
The fastness of the Seminoles—
Till now unconquered race!

“Romance with savage ways must go,”
So clanks the dredge. Drear fate!
Simplicity abased by greed—
The White Man shoves the gate.

In angered mood the chieftain stood,
Ignoring clouds up-piled;
A storm there raged within his breast,
The beating rain less wild.

That outer storm, with tropic speed,
Soon laughed itself away,
And lo! a rainbow gleamed above
That soothed his sad dismay.

THE SEMINOLE'S LAMENT

The shower had stilled the monstrous dredge,
There came Great Spirit's voice;
"The treacherous White may steal thy lands,
But still I say rejoice!

"Along the seven-coloured way
Thy sleeping soul will wing
To wake in Happy Hunting Grounds,
Where Braves may dance and sing.

"The heavens are wide with swamp and
glade;
There roams the shaggy bear;
In clear, cool springs glide silver fish,
'Mid thickets glint the deer.

"The heavens are wide and there, may be,
The White Man's mansions stand,
But far away from wooded swamp,
From Seminoles' fair land."

NANCESOWEE.

Still, Caloosahatchee's waters;
Still, its palm-fringed shore;
Still, the wild duck floating;
My heart throbs peace once more.

The many neckerchiefs I've knotted,
Well broached my turban's fold,
Again I'm garbed as ever
My ancestors of old.

Nancesowee has called and waked me,
('Twas but ambition's dream),
I sought the White Man's wigwam,
All knowledge was my scheme.

His varnished door stood widely open,
His Book I learned to read,
In part most like the teachings
Good Seminoles must heed.

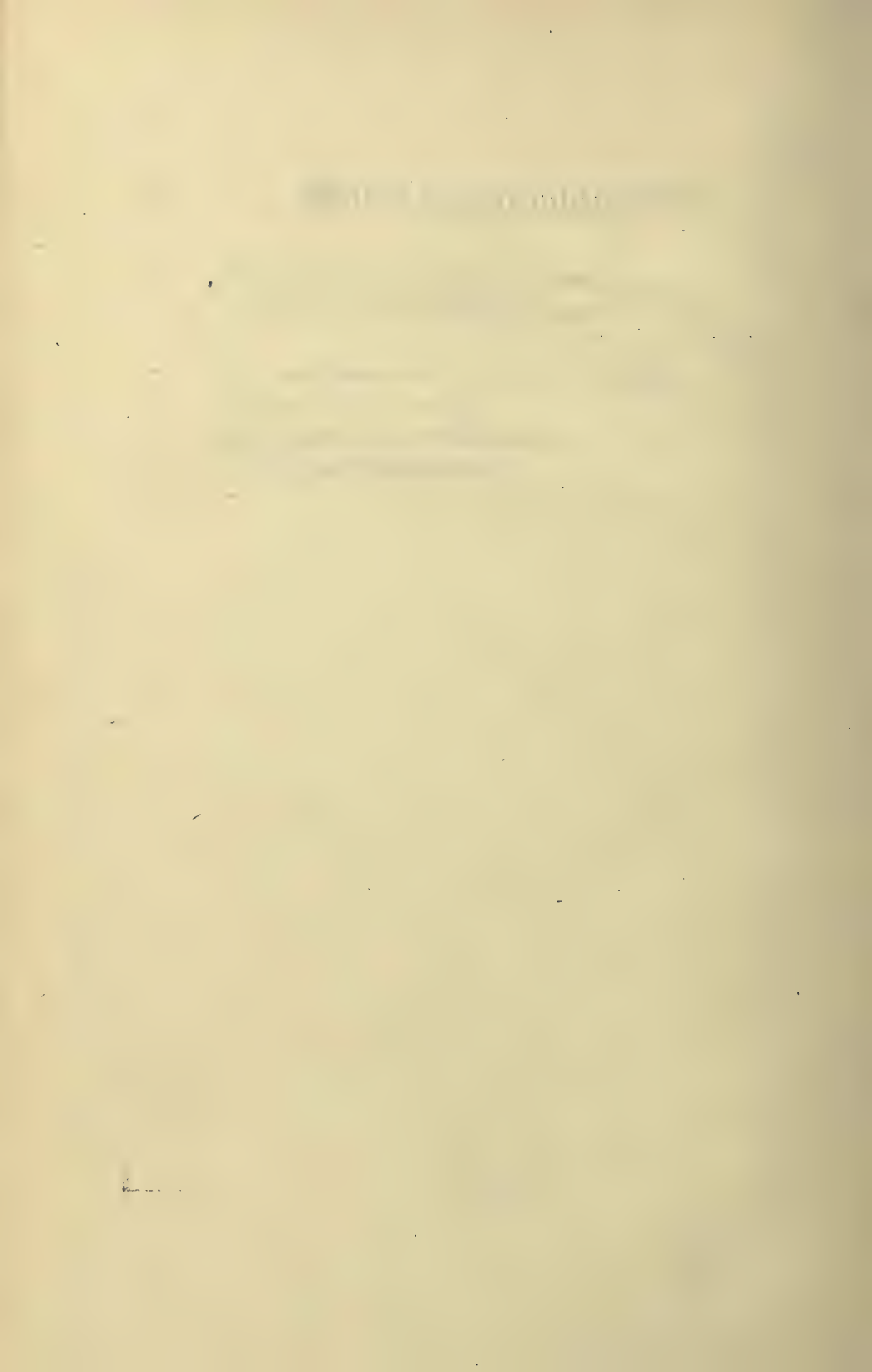
The White Man's tongue's less forked, less
evil,
Than told round council-fires,
The path he treads less crooked,
Yet simpler my desires.

Nancesowee has called and waked me,
Our Fathers' ways are best;

Palmetto-thatched our wigwam,
With love we'll build our nest.

For necklaces rich beads I'm bringing;
Gay bolts of calico;
My squaw will be the fairest,
My gentle forest doe!

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS



BECAUSE HE LIVED.

Though laughter lurked in his blue eyes,
 Their sweetness linked man's soul with God.
A Spirit walked in earthly guise
 And sacred where his feet have trod.

No broken pillar marks his grave;
 A life begun, that life's complete.
A splendid youth—the gift he gave—
 With manly grace and power replete.

Because he lived this earth seems good,
 A shrine that holds such memory.
Though young he suffered, understood;
 Because he lived, I hold life's key!

**THE GREAT SILENCE .*

I pause as swells that booming sound,
Like distant roar of guns;
An Empire's force is gagged and bound,
An Empire weeps her sons.

Great waves of stillness sweep my soul—
In memory this pause—
All thought has slipped from earth's control,
Submerged in vast applause.

An Empire mourns her countless dead,
Alike their sacrifice,
Their praise she sings—erect her head!
Let none forget the price!

* On the first anniversary of the Armistice a two minutes' pause in remembrance of the dead was announced by whistles throughout the British Empire.

"THY KINGDOM COME."

The aftermath of war upheaves

Like swell that follows heavy tide;

The sullen roar of cannon leaves

Drear mocking echoes that deride—

Grim jests of lofty purposes.

There is no Peace! though Mirth shrills
loud!

Distrust, thief-like, still flourishes

And Selfishness grows sleek and proud.

What remedy? The knife may prune,

Uprootings give new systems birth.

For change, the time's most opportune;

Restrictions chafe!—improve this earth,

New governments, new forms and rites!

And yet no Peace! unless that Peace

The chastened heart of man invites—

"Thy Kingdom Come!" That soul has
Peace.

FORTITUDE.

Come Good! come Ill! Experience the struc-
ture ye must raise,
Beyond whose bounds no wand'ring soul may
roam in curse or praise,
Invisible this temple of material divine
That's portioned from the Universe, where
spark and dust combine.
A Disappointment reared that pinnacle, a Joy
that tower,
Now Sorrow fortifies the masonry and carves
this flower!

AMID THE SKY SCRAPERS.

The wind that's sweeping down this canyoned
street,

That twirls grey dust in teasing clouds,
That flings dry waves of fire, midsummer
heat,

Against these thirsting city crowds.

Once tossed green-curving seas to glist'ning
foam,

Once blew the scent of meadow-flowers,
Once curled the smoke above an ancient home,
Once cooled soft air with sun-kissed
showers.

CHIRP! CHIRP!

"Chirp! chirp!" sang the bird, "now answer
me,

Why am I caged and you go free?"

"Ah, little bird, you have voice to sing,
Freer are you than a songless thing!"

*AN ENGLISH GARDEN
RECALLED.*

A potted wallflower; well, may be, may be,
But this is what my old eyes see:
A garden walk that's neatly hedged with box,
Geraniums peep round nodding stocks;
Beneath the bank a velvet stretch of lawn,
Where fairies prance—they flaunt the dawn
In daisy garb; demure! 'tis but pretence!
That shrubbery beside the fence
Hides elfin partners safe 'mid prickled
leaves:

Who ventures after—torn his sleeves,
Bedaubed his nose with smuts the holly traps,
And daisies smile at his mishaps.

Much kinder friends the quiet snails who
slime

The dusky wall, their haunts where climb
The gillyflowers whose fragrance permeates
My dream, whose simple charm awaits,
Forgotten oft in noisy childish play,
Too strenuous this sultry day.
Twice thirty times my shuttlecock has flown
Nor touched the grass, though high 'twas
thrown.

Now tired, with garn'rings from the berry-
patch,

AN ENGLISH GARDEN RECALLED

I seek the summer-house to snatch
These forty winks from Father Time's deep
 sack,
Ne'er measured by man's almanack.

A potted wallflower, well, may be, may be,
Of childhood days it talks to me!

A CLASS REUNION.

Asudden I felt a hand-touch,
 A smile from the misty past,
Recalling the days of girlhood
 With visions unfolding fast.

Eight eager young faces peering,
 Ambition has beckoned each,
A glistening prize she flutters,
 Through mazes they grope and reach.

Their footsteps apart have echoed,
 Together they blend once more,
And softest but sweetest sounding,
 The one whose pursuit is o'er.

AN EASTER CHRISTENING.

When Faith was christened, lilies lined the
fount,
Proclaiming joyous Eastertide,
When once upon an olive-gardened mount
Was heaven-led One crucified.

When Faith was christened; sorrow, ling'ring
near,
Weighed souls with life's uncertainties,
A Cousin, whom all loved, had passed from
here,
The sweet babe's name strewed gracious
ease.

When Faith was christened, sunshine
streamed the earth,
With rays of hope that pierced dull sorrow.
The love that welcomed this fair infant's
birth,
Predicts for her a joyous morrow.

THE ANGEL PITIED.

An Angel winged, two horns he held:
One scattered good, one scattered ill.

A crowd below were jostling round;
In gathering good, they gathered ill.

They prayed the Angel to desist,
He scattered good, nor trace of ill.

All seemed content, then moaned the Saint:
"How now God's destiny fulfil?"

Then growled the Stoic, one no more:
"How prove the strength of human will?"

Then sighed the Poet, speechless now:
"Misfortune gone, my muse is still."

The jovial Tramp fell fast asleep,
Monotony he sought to kill.

The Angel pitied—God knows best—
He scattered good, he scattered ill.

*TO THE DISCOVERER OF LAKE
GEORGE.*

Who named this lake, St. Sacramento, what
thought
Was thine when first thy fevered eyes
beheld
Its mountain-nurtured course; thy craft
propelled
By captor savages? Thy wounds dear bought
If its fair winding stream suggested nought
Of Paradise, whose path thy torture
knelled;
Some perfumed wafts from slumbrous pine
dispelled
Perchance that gloom fierce agony had
wrought.

As now I watch Lake George, pale lit by
stars,
Didst thou one time? Nor dreamt posterity
Would shed its tears for thy poor mar-
tyred hands,
Nor dreamt that happiness might sway
these lands,
No longer heard war-song nor musketry,
That earth could free itself from battle scars?

REPOSE.

Sublimity's not yours, ye gentle slopes!
But restful calm that breathes renewed
content,
That shames to flight those passions turbulent,
Unquiet thoughts whose dark the sufferer
gropes,
Ill moods with which the weakened frame
scarce copes,
Sublimity's not yours, but blandishment
Of soft green curves that rise in mild ascent,
Well-being, satisfied with tranquil hopes.

Yet once sublime, in tragic wrath, ye rose,
Sharp-pointed rocks that pricked fierce-
angered seas;
That cloudwards soared, unclothed and
stern and free;
But endless time has curbed your
majesty,
Has shorn your peaks and draped with shading trees—
My puny life from yours now learns repose.

THE PIONEER.

To tread the trackless forest I was born,
 There blaze the trail that leads to solitude,
 Where lurk those furtive thoughts that now
 elude,
Those shy, wild things the world has learnt to
 scorn;
To wake 'neath tall red-pines, faint tinged with
 morn,
 My couch soft moss, spruce-pillowed, sweet
 though rude,
 Where bird's call stirs a pleasant lassitude,
To rise as fades the moon's pale fleecy horn.

There daylight glammers, now dim-seen in
 dreams,
 A solitude that palpitates with life;
 Each leafy sprout, each tree a sentient
 being;
Jocose the spirits sporting i' mountain
 streams;
 The beasts with love, as flowers with honey,
 rife,
 Man's soul and Nature's soul once more
 agreeing.

THE END.

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